CATHOLIC SEX MORALITY

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SEX MORALITY

BY

DR. RUDOLPH GEIS, S.T.D.

Director of the Archiepiscopal Seminary of Freiburg im Breisgau

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

CHARLES BRUEHL, PH.D.

WITH A PREFACE BY

DOMINIC PRUEMMER, O.P., S.T.D.

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

NEW YORK

JOSEPH F. WAGNER, INC.

LONDON: B. HERDER

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, August 25, 1930

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY JOSEPH F. WAGNER, INC., NEW YORK

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

SEX ETHICS is one of the most important and keenly debated problems of the present day. Freud's psychoanalysis, indeed, goes so far as to refer all abnormal psychic conditions to repressed sexual emotions, and even in the baby in the cradle sees sex instinct at work. Now, though this theory of Freud's has been rightly rejected, it nevertheless remains true that the sex instinct is exceedingly powerful in very many individuals, and easily leads to the most serious disorders. Daily experience proves this only too clearly, and indicates besides that the evil is found among the married as well as the unmarried. In the married state, indeed, an unbridled sex life produces a far more devastating effect than among single people, since it involves the ruin of the family itself, thus sapping the very foundation of the State.

Neomalthusianism—or, as it is euphemistically called, "birth control"—is thus a most dangerous evil that threatens the State and the family with certain ruin. This pestilential evil is flourishing

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

in every land, and is extending its baneful influence from year to year, as birth statistics convincingly prove. The origin of this birth control movement has been traced to the social and material distress in which so many families are involved, but this explanation cannot be accepted as quite accurate, for birth control—the system that finds its expression in families of one or two children—prevails not only among the poorer classes of the population, but also and to a much higher degree among the wealthy families that are free from all material worries. This again can be clearly established from statistics. Consequently, it is evident that social and material distress cannot be the cause—or at least the chief cause—of Neomalthusianism. The cause is to be found rather in the ethico-religious domain. Many, very many, people today fail to recognize that, according to the wise provision of the Creator, the sex instinct was given to man for the perpetuation of the human race, and not for the satisfaction of individual lust. They forget, furthermore, that this instinct, which has been so deeply corrupted by original sin, must be curbed from adolescence onwards, for otherwise it will develop into a passion impossible to subdue. In

early youth this instinct resembles a spark glimmering among the ashes and apparently holding no threat of widespread devastations. But let this spark be once fanned into a blazing flame, and all our attempts to extinguish it will usually be vain until everything has been charred or consumed. How often do we hear otherwise worthy young people complain: "Lust of the flesh has gained such mastery over me that I can no longer resist it!" How often do we hear other young folks, who have now turned their backs on religion, declare: "I must and will drink life's goblet to the dregs! I will quaff the cup of pleasure with deep draughts!" And too often the end is ruin, religious, moral, material, and physical. Just as immorality once destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha, it ruins numberless individuals and families today.

Consequently, Dr. Rudolf Geis has treated a very practical topic in this work. He shows that Catholic ethics alone—that is, an ethics that rests on a truly religious basis—can protect and preserve from the aberrations of the sex instinct. In noble, composed and convincing language, he first discusses the moral life of man from the objective standpoint; then he proceeds to a beautiful and logical analysis of the physical and psychical sides

of sex life, of its ethics and pædogogics. A careful perusal of this work will lead every reader to the conclusion: here is a book that deserves the widest distribution, especially among educated young people.

DOMINIC PRUEMMER, O.P., S.T.D.
University of Fribourg, Switzerland.

FOREWORD

On the chaotic state of sex morality in our days we need not dwell, since it is patent to every eye. It stands to reason that this condition of things is productive of much human unhappiness and social disintegration, for sex cuts deep into human life, and human happiness and social well-being depend in a large measure on a rational solution of the sex problem. Wrong attitudes towards sex are ruinous in their practical consequences and play havoc with the finer values of life. Our generation is beginning to see that it is making a sad failure and a sorry farce of life.

There are those who fondly hope that out of this chaos a new order will emerge, and that the sex morals of the future will rise to a new high level on which humanity will achieve a greater happiness and attain to a finer degree of self-realization. These optimists are hugging an illusion to their hearts, because our age is seeking the solution of the sex problem in the wrong direction. To liberate the sex life from all inhibitions, to surrender it completely to individual

whim and fancy, to detach it from responsibility and to release it from social sanctions, does not make for human betterment and elevation, but, on the contrary, will accentuate the evils which are already so much in evidence. Naturalism cannot point the way out of the sex misery that weighs so heavily on the men and women of our days and especially has descended like a blight on the young. A naturalistic age will be mastered and enslaved by sex because it unduly exalts and glorifies sex; and sex is a ruthless master. The prevalent apotheosis of sex can eventuate only in the most shameful sex bondage. The drift in that direction is but too apparent. It is a terrible irony that those who use sex for the ends of personal gratification become its helpless victims and abject slaves. The much vaunted self-expression along sex lines which so many nowadays demand as their right is nothing but self-degradation. The phenomenon is not new, for St. Paul refers to it in very expressive language. By the same token, self-realization in this sphere results in self-frustration, because it means an arrest of the spiritual development. Where sex rules, man does not reach his full stature but only achieves a stunted growth. The naturalists fail to see this, for to

them sex is the supreme cosmic fact that overshadows everything else. Of a subordination of the demands of the sex instinct to other ends they will not hear. Repression and restraint are their bogies. Naturalism holds out no hope to us in the existing moral crisis. It wants to reap the finer things, which sex can yield only when it has been disciplined, mastered and transfigured, from the undisciplined and crude instinct. Dr. Henry Neumann exposes the flaw in the naturalist's argument when he writes: "Nobody can deny the existence, the power, and the value of the primal instincts. Their power is all too evident. Their value when they are rightly directed is immense. The comradeship of men and women united in love, the blessings of parenthood, the many inspirations to excellent achievement which people get from sex attraction and from love of their children, are precious as can be. But these finer fruitages come from keeping the sex impulses under the control of ideals of order, faithfulness, responsibility" ("Modern Youth and Marriage," New York City).

False sympathy has prompted others to build up a new sex ethics on human weakness. This does not even help those who have already gone wrong,

for to tear down one restriction does not ensure the integrity of the next one. Indulgence goes on spreading, when it is not authoritatively checked, and will recognize no limits. High ideals generate moral power and brace the individual against his own weakness. By lowering the ideal you rob men of what little spiritual strength they have left. The ethics of weakness is the surest way to a complete disintegration of moral character. Confront an individual with an inflexible moral imperative, and something of moral force will stir within him; remove the moral imperative and the collapse of character will be absolute. "Thou must!" is a sharp fillip that arouses the will and excites ambition. "Thou must, therefore thou canst," is what our generation must be told. It will, then, again win faith in its own moral strength. The message of the ethics of weakness is: "Thou canst not, therefore thou must not." This message paralyzes the will and stifles all moral ambition. It presages the end of all striving. Such an ethics of accommodation by its suggestion of moral impotence renders even the strong weak and undermines their power of resistance; but the weak it deprives of the last trace of self-reliance, and thrusts them into the abyss.

Pedagogically and psychologically viewed, nothing can be more fatal than the ethics of weakness that patterns the ideal after the lowest practice. The moderns have forgotten the important psychological truth that a strong ethical imperative carries with it the intimate and subtle suggestion of power and rebukes the insolence of the lower impulses. Even the educational tyro knows that he can bring to the surface unexpected resources of will power and awaken dormant energies by proposing a particularly difficult and arduous task, when an easy problem would have produced no reaction and caused no response. In this light of pedagogical experience we must judge the modern ethics of weakness. Thus seen, it appears as the solvent of moral fiber. Instead of bringing freedom, as its advocates promise, it terminates in spiritual enslavement of the worst type. As a matter of fact, we are here in presence of a sinister defeatism that saps the morale of our generation and despairs of a rational solution of the sex problem.

There can be no question that sex is overemphasized in modern civilization. It intrudes itself into everything and actually dominates life. By some it is regarded as the main factor of

human progress and the root from which civilization flowers. Mr. V. F. Calverton remarks: "Our own age is one in which this sex monism has become prominent. Sex has become an obsession" ("The Bankruptcy of Marriage," New York City). Although this overplaying of sex represents a grotesque distortion of reality, still it is in keeping with other trends of the time, such as materialism, pleasure-seeking and commercialism. Commercialism finds the exploitation of sex exceedingly profitable. The votary of pleasure worships at its altars. To the eyes of the carnal-minded it appears with a fascinating glamour. Here, then, are the reasons why sex bulges so large in our present-day world. Only there can sex be reduced to its right proportions where the true meaning of life is understood and where man's destiny is not identified with this short span of earthly existence.

The first condition of a right practical attitude is knowledge. Well says Mr. Sherwood Eddy: "Probably most of us will agree that in no other area of life do we so need reliable information and the gathered results of the experience of the race. Those in the ranks of youth, of necessity inexperienced, are here dealing with vast forces

—primitive, imperious, dynamic—forces that make or mar them, and that may shape and mould them for life-long happiness and misery" ("Sex and Youth," New York City). There are two reasons why few of those who write and speak on sex in our days have authentic knowledge on the subject. One reason is that, though they may really know much about sex, they know little about life. This fatal onesidedness biases and vitiates all their conclusions. The sex specialist lacks the competence to write a science of human conduct. He cannot even write well on his own subject because he sees it out of perspective and out of focus. Hence so much ill-digested and immature writing on this topic. The other reason for the inadequacy of modern sex literature is the absence of metaphysics in contemporary thinking. Mere experience does not afford a sufficiently broad basis for a comprehensive treatment of the sex question. The ultimate consequences of sex conduct are too far-reaching to be taken in by experience. They transcend experience and may not become evident until the next generation. For example, the general breakdown of loyalty as a result of divorce cannot be observed by those who recommend this measure

now as a means to individual happiness. The more important consequences lie in the distant future and escape observation. Only the metaphysical approach can give us the key to the solution of the sex problem. It is from this point of view that the subject is treated in the present volume. This does not say that it disregards experience and indulges in airy speculation; no, it keeps in closest touch with the realities of life.

Catholic sex morality condemns divorce and insists on a real monogamy as the only form of human sex life. Temporary monogamy is not monogamy at all, but a mere subterfuge for open polygamy. "A monogamy which is interrupted by frequent divorce is a monogamy only in fiction, but not in fact. The essential idea of monogamy is a relationship of lifelong duration. Otherwise, Mr. Mencken's witticism, 'Certainly I believe in monogamy, one woman at a time,' is sound doctrine. In other words, if merely living with one woman at a time is monogamy, then many forms of free love are fundamentally monogamous. . . . Divorce in itself is a violation of the concept. Numerous divorces render it absurd. Bishop Charles Fiske, therefore, is not ex-

aggerating when he describes the present trend in marriage as a tide of consecutive polygamy. And he is equally correct when he maintains that, if you take away the thought of finality and determination from the marriage vow, you rob it of its virtue and meaning" (V. F. Calverton, *op. cit.*). There, then, is the *proton pseudos* of modern sex ethics: as long as it sanctions divorce with subsequent remarriage, and in this manner puts the seal of approval on consecutive polygamy, it cannot maintain sex life on a decently human level; for, since it thus introduces the element of promiscuity, it cheapens and vulgarizes the sex relationship, which on account of its intimate character demands an absolute exclusiveness. This fundamental indelicacy inherent in divorce has blunted public sensibility to the extent that practically all privacy and reserve in sex matters have disappeared. A coarse and vulgar publicity divests sex life of its personal character and intimacy, and profanes it by exposing it to the gaze of the curious.

Steadfastly, Catholic sex morality opposes the application to the realm of sex of the immoral principle that the end justifies the means, just as

it disavows the nefarious principle in any other department of human conduct. Now, whatever one may say to the contrary, the justification of birth control is based on this notorious principle. Moreover, in the whole field of modern sex ethics this destructive principle plays a conspicuous part. Even the temptations and hardships which husbands and wives suffer cannot induce Catholic ethics to turn evil into good and to call moral what is immoral. These men and women suffer in the cause of justice, and it is one of the Beatitudes to suffer for the sake of justice and for the Kingdom of Heaven. At one time, in the early centuries of Christianity, husbands and wives were able to live together as brothers and sisters, for the glory of Christ, as glad witnesses of the newly discovered power of the spiritual man. The Catholics of our own age are called upon again to bear witness to the freedom of the spiritual man and to the undiminished power of divine grace.

In view of the conditions set forth above, a new and well-reasoned exposition of Catholic sex morality is not out of place. Dr. Geis, whose work in this translation is made accessible to the

English-speaking public, clearly states the principles of Catholic sex ethics. He digs deep down to the bedrock of facts in order to give them a secure and impregnable foundation. The arguments, though not exclusively, are chiefly based on reason.

THE TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR.

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE. By Dominic Pruemmer, O.P., S.T.D. iii

FOREWORD. By the Translator and Editor . . vii

CHAPTER

I. THE REVOLT 1

II. THE METHOD OF APPROACH . . . 8

III. THE BIOLOGICAL SIDE OF SEX LIFE . . 14

A. The Facts and Their Ethical Appreciation 15

B. Practical Inferences 24

IV. THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF SEX LIFE . . . 36

A. The Facts and Their Ethical Appreciation 40

B. Corollaries 48

V. THE ETHICS OF SEX LIFE 60

A. The General Norm 61

B. Specific Precepts 63

VI. EDUCATION AND SEX 67

A. The Value of Chastity 69

B. The Road to Chastity 73

C. The Preservation of Chastity . . . 81

D. The Test and Confirmation of Chastity 89

VII. RETROSPECT 99

BIBLIOGRAPHY 104

CHAPTER I

THE REVOLT

On the practically unanimous admission of observers of our days, one of the most outstanding features of modern civilization is the low level of its sex life. The sorry plight into which our generation has fallen has reached such an acute stage that it may well be called a crisis. Chaos is the only term adequately describing the condition that prevails with regard to sex matters. In the sphere of sex the world of today has lost all sense of orientation; it is hopelessly perplexed and tragically bewildered. The entire sex morality of the past is being questioned and regarded with open distrust, if not with frank hostility.

The chief characteristic of this crisis is the conscious and deliberate attempt to discredit the Christian ideal of marriage and to brush aside the traditional sex morality as outmoded and incompatible with modern life. Widespread sexual immorality is not the significant point; other periods in history have witnessed the same phenom-

enon, due either to the absence of high ideals or to human frailty in daily practice falling short of the recognized ideal. But what is typical of our days is the revolt against the ideal, the conscious lowering of standards, the theoretical admission of the impotence of the spirit, and the abject surrender to the demands of the flesh. Now, when a generation frankly abandons lofty moral principles and tampers with the ideal, the consequences are bound to be by far more disastrous and distressing than when it merely violates the moral norms in practice whilst it still upholds their objective validity. This is the serious situation that confronts us at the moment.

The determined and fierce battle waged against the Christian concept of sex life and marriage proves by the manner in which it is conducted that the Christian idea is but superficially grasped, seen only in its fractional aspects and not visioned as a whole. As a result, its saving power and its beneficent and liberating influences cannot be fully appreciated. Hence it is that the modern ethical reformer, not perceiving its embracing adequacy, suggests a revision that will render it more elastic. Such an adjustment in the direction of greater laxity it is falsely thought will remedy

the present evils. To these ill-advised reformers we reply in the words of Professor F. W. Foerster: "Just as bodily health can never be really and permanently benefited by any measure that is destructive of the spiritual life, so no social abuse can ever be remedied by a shortsighted expediency that, in order to afford momentary relief, sacrifices the spiritual forces that give cohesion to the totality of life" ("Marriage and the Sex Problem," translated by Meyrick Booth, Ph.D., New York City). The institution of marriage as the only form of human sex life is a spiritual force of incalculable value. It makes for the cohesion of social life and stands for character in the life of the individual. It staves off social and moral disintegration. To imagine that social salvation, enrichment of life and genuine freedom can come by anything that tends to weaken this life-preserving force, bespeaks ethical amateurishness of the rankest and immaturest kind. Only gross misunderstanding can counsel such a ruinous policy, which offers momentary palliatives that will only increase the evil to be remedied. The fallacy underlying this procedure is clearly pointed out by Mr. Sherwood Eddy when he describes it as follows: "It implies a hasty, easy self-gratification

ST. ALBERT

at the expense of the more complete functioning of life in the future. It is a short-circuiting of life on its primitive and exclusively physical levels, an arresting of life's full promise and progress short of its higher spiritual completion and fulfillment. It sacrifices the long and significant for the short and fleeting present" ("Sex and Youth," New York City).

Accordingly, it becomes a timely task to make this noble institution better understood by setting forth its organic structure, its correlation of duties and opportunities, its vital contacts with all the phenomena of human life, its wonderful potency for the realization of the truest and highest happiness and its sacramental elevation and strengthening. Only such a true picture, free from all distortion and onesidedness, is capable of guiding our policies and preventing the opportunistic blunder of sacrificing real values for apparent advantages that, whilst promising temporary alleviation of social or personal difficulties, ultimately undermine the very foundations of life.

From the psychological point of view, a restatement of the Catholic position has its eminent usefulness on account of the vehemence of the natural instincts, which have a tendency to

obscure the right view and again and again make imperative an explicit reassertion of the rights and needs of the spiritual side of the human self. Human dignity depends upon the right attitude towards the natural instincts, and true personality is achieved by vigorous self-discipline. The educational value of chastity, a virtue inextricably interwoven with the true doctrine of marriage, lies precisely in this, that it gives unequivocal expression to the supremacy of the spirit, the very root of moral character. The formation of the moral personality is impossible without complete control of the sensual appetites and the full recognition of the superior force of spiritual love, which makes man more inclined to give than to accept and more determined to resist than to yield. It is this view which honors man and gives him the larger freedom. "The naturalistic point of view, on the other hand," argues Dr. Henry Neumann, "is a counsel of surrender to that in man which he shares with the lower orders of being. It fails to do him justice. The ethical view pays man by far the handsomer tribute" ("Modern Youth and Marriage," New York City). True, but the instability of the emotional and the insistence of the sense urges require that these

higher values be deeply anchored in our conviction so that nothing can dislodge them. Not the slightest doubt must remain regarding the absolute and immutable character of the moral norms lest passion attempt to modify them. In the realm of sex, where the interests of society and the individual desire for unhampered liberty and license so frequently clash, salvation can come only from inflexible imperatives, invested with absolute authority whilst at the same time manifesting a thorough harmony with the realities and exigencies of life.[1] When such an insight into the nature of moral principles has been obtained, it becomes clear that they are not alien to the actual needs of life and society, but are the indispensable conditions for the fullest personal development and the true welfare of society. Only then can there be an intelligent conviction of the inviolability of the moral laws under all circumstances and of the suicidal folly of interfering with them under any pretext, when it is

[1] "It is sometimes assumed," says Dr. J. A. Hadfield, "that the law of nature is opposed to the moral law, which is conceived to be derived from some source outside nature. . . . There is no fundamental antagonism between biology and morality; moral laws are the enunciation of the higher laws of biology" ("Psychology and Morals," New York City). Morality sees further ahead than science; it often anticipates the results of scientific research.

fully grasped that they are rooted in nature, sanctioned by life, and backed by the cosmic order. This is the lesson that our age—which has come to look upon morality as something merely artificial and accidental, as an arbitrary convention, as a superficial embroidery on life—must relearn for its own good and the salvation of society. The timely character and the practical import of an exposition of a sound sex morality, then, are quite apparent and need not be demonstrated.

CHAPTER II

THE METHOD OF APPROACH

HUMAN life is not merely a mechanical process unfolding itself after the stimulus-response pattern; it takes on its distinctly human complexion only when it becomes a deliberate and creative realization of the purposes and ideals which God has associated with human nature and life. To translate into actuality the various potential energies that constitute our mental and physical equipment, according to their relative value, is our moral task and destiny. "Man is human," says Dr. Neumann, "to the extent that he can hold his desires up to the light, place them, evaluate them, see them in relation to one another and to the whole scheme of ultimately worthwhile things, and say: This desire is better; this other must be kept in place" (*op. cit.*). The starting-point of morality is the intimate conviction that our actions and deeds are endowed with an inherent meaning and possessed of an objective value, according to which they take their relative

position in a hierarchical scale. Unless such an order of objective values exists, it would be futile to speak of a moral evaluation of human actions.

The false methodology lying behind most of the present-day discussion concerning sexual behavior is inspired by the assumption that it is in our power to invest any activity with the significance and value we wish to impart to it. Now, it is quite true that to many things, actions and forms we can give an arbitrary significance according to our choice; this is what happens when we create symbols, ceremonies and conventions which are devoid of ulterior meaning beyond that which we assign to them. In this realm we are free to make and unmake values as it suits our good pleasure, or as social expediency may suggest. Values thus created, of course, are fictitious, accidental, external, conventional, and therefore subject to change. There are things and actions, however, that do not wait for us to imbue them with meaning. Nature has stamped them with an inalterable import that is determined by an innate tendency and fixed by an inherent bias. To deny this is to deny design and finality in the universe. Where such purport is objectively established, it carries with it for all intelligent

agents the quality of moral obligation, inasmuch as the utilization of this inherent tendency according to its natural bent represents a necessary condition for the realization of the scheme of nature as conceived and planned by the Creator.

As rational beings and moral agents, then, our chief concern must be to discover the processes and functions which by their very structure and innate drift, independently of any human afterthought, possess an unmistakable meaning and purport and reveal an immanent law, even as the entire creation is built according to measure, number and weight. Of no small importance is it that we use the right procedure in this inquiry by which we wish to get at the heart of this immanent law. The temptation exists to judge things by their immediate relation to ourselves and to make pleasurable experience the criterion of value. Many succumb to this lure, but if we adopt this subjective criterion we will be led far astray and lapse into gross libertinism. Mere experience, especially since it is so often wrongly interpreted by emotional interest, is untrustworthy where issues of such gravity are at stake. We are prone to overestimate the value of our experience and to become the dupes of rationalization when-

ever personal interests are involved. Well does Professor F. W. Foerster say: "In this great age of criticism the most important of all criticisms is unfortunately more than ever wanting—namely, self-criticism, the exact measuring of the limited range of our individual experience and observation, and the objective evaluation of the subjective springs of disturbance in our thought and judgment, factors which loom larger the more our own doings are concerned" (*op. cit.*).

A leading daily newspaper recently asked the question, how it came about that within ten years after the termination of the World War the initially so mighty wave of pacifism had ebbed. "Why," it queries, "has the number of those who have the courage to express the anti-militaristic sentiments that were so common in 1918 declined so rapidly? We can think of only one explanation. It is this. Since for the majority the hatred of war was only a sentiment born of experience, it lacked the power to produce a permanent conviction, and especially to grip those who, born in a new time, knew nothing of this experience. Nothing that is merely the outcome of experience can crystallize into an unquestioned conviction and assume the character of an absolute moral imper-

ative, binding for all times. Each generation wants to make its own experiences. Only that which emerges from the depths of clear intellectual insight is enduring and cannot be obscured by the flux of time." Lessons drawn from experience only are dimmed by time and gradually whittled away by the sophistry of the instincts.

Not the empirical approach, therefore, can reveal those basic aspects of things that are significant for human conduct. Not sentimental mood, be it ever so well intentioned, nor vivid impression, though aroused by sympathy with suffering, can be allowed to dictate our evaluations of human actions. Both sentimentality and impressionism are disastrous in this sphere, where reliable information is so essential and self-deception so likely to occur. If we wish to reach an unwavering conclusion about the sense and value of life and the meaning which our actions have in the context of life, we must go beyond experience and take our stand on metaphysical ground. From this point of vantage we see the true nature of things and happenings. Hence, we learn the meaning, purpose and scope of a faculty and the uses for which it is intended and to which human

conduct must conform, by studying carefully the natural operation of this faculty and the spontaneous effects resulting from its unobstructed operation. A conscientious diagnosis of this type and a comprehensive survey of the essential consequences following in the wake of an action will furnish us with a reliable picture of the ends which nature seeks and which man must respect. Only in this manner can a conviction arise that will be theoretically impregnable as well as practically efficacious. The road is beset with the specious sophisms of passion and the fallacious pleas of a false humanitarianism so that nothing but the most uncompromising logic and unswerving devotion to truth can carry us to the goal.

CHAPTER III

THE BIOLOGICAL SIDE OF SEX LIFE

We begin our inquiry with the vital question: "Does the sexual nature of man embody an immanent meaning and an objective purpose, and are these adequately manifested by the natural sexual processes so as to impose themselves as laws of the natural order and norms of human conduct?" The answer to this question will come from an unbiased analysis of the sex facts in their undistorted reality and in all their irradiations. This study will disclose the purpose that is to be fulfilled and reveal the values that are to be realized by the sex act. It will bring to light the object which the Creator had in view when He endowed man with sexuality.

The ethical sublimation of the sex life is indeed a fascinating topic, but it cannot legitimately be discussed until we have familiarized ourselves with the actual facts; for sublimation does not alter the original facts but must be grafted on them. It is also true that the sex act has a psychic

side, which unfortunately is often ignored or undervalued, so that the act is degraded to a mere bodily function and robbed of all spiritual significance. Nevertheless, even the highest spiritualization cannot change the essential nature of the act. Primarily, the sex act belongs to the sphere of the sense life. From this point our examination must take its departure. It is basic for all other considerations. Modern writers on the subject persistently disregard the biological motive in the sex life, and pretend to see in the sexual union directly and independently of all biological purpose a spiritual significance and higher value of its own. In their estimate the sex life is for the individual, and not for the sake of the race.

A. The Facts and Their Ethical Appreciation

Biology teaches us that in the higher organisms the production of new life is dependent on the union of male and female germ cells. The depositories of the two kinds of germ cells which originate new human life are those organs of man and woman that constitute their respective sexual peculiarity. Man and woman by this corporal differentiation are equipped for coöperation in the

production of new life; neither of them alone, but only when both together effect a union between their different germ cells—that is, when they become one principle of action (one flesh, as the Bible puts it) in the service of nascent life. For the accomplishment of this task, the normal human body possesses a definite anatomical structure adapted to the production and the transmission of the elements required for fertilization.

The functioning of the reproductive apparatus is subject to certain restrictions. The secretion of germ cells does not begin before the age of puberty, and in the case of woman ceases with the climacteric period. Moreover, the actual transmission of the cells is a reflex act, and not under the direct control of conscious volition. Reflex movements are reactions to nervous excitations caused either by external or internal stimuli. Once these excitations have become operative, the process runs its preëstablished course independently of the will, the action of which is limited to an acceptance or rejection of the stimuli. The nerves ministering to the sex life are provided with a high degree of excitability, which is necessary to call into play the reflexes presiding over reproduction. The nervous excitations associated with

the procreative act reverberate in consciousness and are accompanied by a pronounced feeling tone. They afford the keenest sense pleasure which man can experience. It is this sense pleasure that invests sex with its glamour and makes it loom so large in the thoughts of man. To inexperienced youth for the first time facing the sex attraction it appears as an irresistible fascination or a menacing temptation. This is not yet the place to explain why the sex nerves are of such extreme sensitiveness, and why the sexual affects assert themselves with such vehemence. We merely state the fact and add provisionally that the imperiousness of the sex impulse is rendered necessary by the fundamentally altruistic nature of sex. So much concerning the physiology of the sex function.

Sex activity awakens dynamic forces of the sense sphere, and brings them (as happens with regard to other organic urges such as hunger and thirst) to a temporary state of pleasant relaxation and agreeable satiety to be aroused again at the occasion of new stimulation. And here is the cardinal point. For, transcending the momentary pleasurable experience connected with the sexual process, the latter may inaugurate consequences

of a lasting and far-reaching nature, since the sex function also has a biological aspect. Because man has no command over the creative seed except through the sexual act, we are here in the presence of the spring of life. The sex act is essentially the discharge of semen; and semen is intrinsically related to reproduction; hence, the sex act and reproduction belong together. To separate them is an artificial proceeding. The sexual union spontaneously culminates in reproduction. If nature has its way and the various contributing factors do not fail, the sex act is followed by fatherhood and motherhood. Mating and reproduction are inseparable phases of the same act. To this conclusion we are inevitably led by the consideration of the biological aspect of the sex act.

This exposition of the facts of the sex life will enable us to gain insight into its meaning and to lay the foundations of its ethical evaluation. The normal direction of the sex urge and the anatomical structure of the human body clearly indicate that in this matter man and woman are intended to be supplementary to each other in a very specific manner. They are destined to enter into a very definite and unique mutual relationship.

The true purpose of a natural disposition and aptitude can be gathered only from its normal operation and its full adequate expression. Mutilated activity can give but a distorted picture. What, then, is the sexual life for? For what has this entire arrangement, which we designate by the name of sex, been devised? At what does nature aim by this remarkable contrivance? The answer appears when we find out what the natural outcome of the complete exercise of the sex function is. The complete exercise of the sex function is that sexual activity in which the entire sex mechanism is in operation, in which the physiological requirements are fulfilled, in which the physiological phenomena and effects are unimpeded, and in which the natural urge comes to a satisfactory rest. This description is verified in none other than the act of normal sexual intercourse between man and woman. But the basic feature of this act is the transmission and reception of the life-originating seed, since the ejecting and the receiving of the seed are reflex movements which follow a course in which voluntary human choice plays no part. Patently, then, life is the ultimate aim and therefore the motivation of the sex function. Its objective is a new life

cradled and nurtured under the heart of the mother. The very circumstance that those who wish to escape the consequences of the sex act must, in order to obtain their end, mutilate the act or frustrate it, proves with impressive evidence that the relation to the production of new life is organic to its very structure. Accordingly, the sex nature of man bears an essential relation to procreation; it is directed towards offspring; regard for the welfare of the offspring, therefore, emerges as the immanent and basic law that must govern all sexual activity.

Whilst this relation to procreation is organically incorporated in the sex function, it does not immediately follow that it is its only purpose nor that it is the predominant one. It does, however, follow that this relation to a new life is radical and fundamental, and not merely an accessory adjunct of an optional nature. Consequently, the demands deduced from the biological significance of the act in reality safeguard the integrity and ensure the proper exercise of the sex function. Attendant on the very nature of the act, these demands are always valid and may never be set aside on the plea that they are incompatible with wishes or advantages that cannot be simultane-

ously realized with them. To them must be accorded absolute and unquestioned precedence.

The biological consequences impart to sexual life a great constructive value. The fruit of the sex act is a human being vested with all the dignities and rights of an ethical personality. This supra-individual character raises the sexual process to a high social plane and makes it the foundation of an exalted mission, to which the Creator Himself called man when He made him a sex being.

As it is impossible to separate the biological phase from the sex act, since it is of the very nature of the latter to actuate the reproductive power, so it is not feasible to ignore that affective tensions are its most distinctive manifestation in consciousness. We can readily understand that man, when especially in his youth he experiences the stirrings of the sex urge as a mysterious discomfort and irritating annoyance, is inclined to look upon the pleasurable relief of these tensions as the chief advantage of the sex function; such, however, is a myopic view that fails to take into account all the aspects of the case. The sensual pleasure that precedes, accompanies and follows the sex act, has indeed its value, which, however,

is not that of an end or final purpose, but merely that of a means and an incentive.

This appraisal of their relative values is suggested by the disproportion that exists between the biological effect of the sex act and the attendant pleasurable phenomenon. They are not commensurate nor on the same plane of excellence. The former is something permanent and substantial, a new entity; the latter something transient and ephemeral, a fleeting state of feeling that is not even essential to the life and health of the individual; the former is a matter of surpassing social and racial importance, the latter does not transcend the interests of the individual. By this test the biological purpose appears as the overshadowing feature of the sex function. But, aside from any such comparison of ultimate results, the decisive argument proving the incidental and subordinate character of sexual pleasure is to be found in its causal relation to the reproductive mechanism which it sets in motion, thus becoming identified with the propagation of the race. Sex pleasure patently serves as an incentive. The powerful drive of the sex instinct has been implanted in man to secure the permanence of humanity. It helps to overcome the natural dis-

taste which the burdens and sacrifices connected with parenthood inspire.

Here we put our finger on the vital difference between Christian ethics and the ethics of naturalism. Whilst the former places the sex appetite in the service of the propagation of the species and emphasizes its supra-individual character, the latter regards it primarily as a source of personal gratification and self-realization, and makes it purely a concern of the individual. Whoever, in this fashion, stresses pleasure as the justification of the sex act commits himself to a flagrant absurdity, since he equivalently asserts that nature, for the production of a quickly passing pleasurable excitement, has devised a contrivance which in a merely incidental manner starts woman on the long and weary *via dolorosa* of pregnancy. In such a scheme all proportions would be violated. Our sense of the fitness of things protests against the possibility of such a preposterous arrangement.

The preceding argument may be summarized as follows: Sex is the instrument for the preservation of the species. From its relation to parenthood sex derives its essential and high value. Sense pleasure enters into the great mystery of

generation as a contributing and inciting factor intended and calculated to guarantee the uninterrupted transmission of the sacred spark of life from generation to generation. Thus, Emerson says: "The preservation of the species was a point of such necessity that Nature has secured it at all hazards by immensely overloading the passions, at the risk of perpetual crime and disorder."

B. Practical Inferences

I

"The more exalted and necessary the purpose of a vital function is, the greater also is the wrong in severing it from its natural scope and context, wrenching it from its meaning and purpose and so, as it were, doing violence to it" (Stanislaus v. Dunin Borkowski, S.J.). The fact that a faculty possesses a well-ascertainable purpose does not exclude the possibility of abuse, but it enables us to draw the line sharply between proper use and misuse. Hence, though the sex nature of man indicates that its proper functioning requires a coöperation between man and woman that will permit the realization of nature's ends, there remains the possibility of aberrations

in the sex life. A perverted use of the sexual power is possible, because the attainment of pleasurable gratification in its exercise can be dissociated from its normal and natural effects.

Man can separate what God has connected as means and end; he can shirk the burden to secure for himself only the pleasure. He can in the sex act prevent the biological consequences and make enjoyment his exclusive preoccupation; but in doing so he violates the right order as expressed in the structure of the act and frustrates the divine plan. Such action is no longer use of a God-given faculty in harmony with its intrinsic tendency, but misuse of the creative faculty for the purpose of selfish gratification. It is not a constructive use for the natural purpose to which it has been adapted.

In psychology human actions are divided according to their motive into serious actions and play actions. Play is an activity which is pursued for its own sake and is not directed towards an ulterior end. It would constitute a glaring misreading of nature and bespeak a total lack of reverence to place sex activity in the category of play and to deny the ulterior objectives for which it has been organized. The body is not a mere

ST. ALBERT'S

toy; all its organs bear the distinct character of purposeful instruments. To degrade the sex life to a means of self-gratification is equivalent to a denial of its intrinsic ends and a rejection of the responsibility attaching to it. Experience bears eloquent witness to the fact that the sex life undergoes a fearful degeneration and begins to manifest itself in the most repulsive forms the moment the sex function is detached from its natural end and dissociated from its inherent tasks. The line that separates the normal from the abnormal in that case is totally obliterated.

The biological purpose is the only criterion that enables us to establish what is normal and abnormal in sex life. Gauged by this test, homosexuality appears as a complete perversion of the sex function. Whatever psychoanalysis may say about its origin, from the ethical point of view it must be regarded as an abnormality, a pathological deviation from what is typical.

Since the exercise of the sex function receives its orientation from its relation to reproduction, two other practices stand as self-condemned: the solitary vice and the artificial frustration of conception. As St. Thomas puts it, the right procedure in sex life is that which promotes the per-

petuation of the race. When this end is set aside, the act becomes inherently defective. It ceases to be the normal act as ordained by nature. It represents a mutilation.

At this point an elucidation is in order. Is not our entire argument rendered void by the fact that nature itself sometimes frustrates the sex act? The objection loses its force when we formulate our position in this manner: the sex act must be performed in such a way that God, acting through the agency of nature, can connect with it the blessing of fertility. Man's causality is only partial and subsidiary. His responsibility as a contributing factor can go no further than his physical ability. The actual fertilization lies not in his power. Sex activity is instrumental coöperation with the forces and laws of nature, but the result of the whole process depends on factors over which the human will has no control and which are shrouded in profound mystery. The part which human activity plays is that of an indispensable condition. Consequently, no more can be expected of the human agents than that they coöperate in such a way that the essential condition to which God can grant fertility is verified. For failure into which malicious intent nowise

enters they cannot be held responsible. They do their part as it is indicated by the structure of the act; if nature fails them, the blame cannot fall on them. Man is not lord and master of nature; in no condition of life can he absolutely and infallibly command success. The latter always remains the outcome of favorable circumstances and often eludes man's sincerest efforts.

Usually, therefore, a negative version is given to the fundamental law of sex life. It takes this form: "Man fulfills his obligation provided he does nothing in a positive way to frustrate the ends of nature." All the elements, thus, are given that enable us to discriminate between voluntary and involuntary sterility.

II

Man's actions are not only bound up with the present moment; by their consequences they reach out into the future. A single act may draw after it a long chain of events. Nowhere is this truer than in the sexual sphere. It is in this realm that the thing happens which G. K. Chesterton so dramatically describes: "Only by the hypocritical ignoring of a huge fact can anyone contrive to talk of free love; as if love were an episode like light-

ing a cigarette, or whistling a tune. Suppose, whenever a man lit a cigarette, a towering genie arose from the rings of smoke and followed him everywhere as a huge slave. Suppose, whenever a man whistled a tune, he drew an angel down and had to walk about forever with a seraph on a string. These catastrophic images are but faint parallels to the earthquake consequences that Nature has attached to sex; and it is perfectly plain at the beginning that a man cannot be a free lover; he is either a traitor or a tied man. The second element that creates the family is that its consequences, though colossal, are gradual; the cigarette produces a baby giant, the song only an infant seraph. Thence arises the necessity for some prolonged system of coöperation; and thence arises the family in its full educational sense" ("What's Wrong With the World?" New York City). Hence, duties beyond the moment are attached to the sex life. The first law which we have formulated prevents an intrinsic separation of the act from its immediate effects and thus safeguards its essential integrity. The second law is intended to prevent a dissociation of the act from its remoter consequences that extend into time. The good of the offspring is not sufficiently

secured merely by giving being to a human individual. Much more is required. The most characteristic feature of human offspring is its utter helplessness. Prolonged care is necessary before it reaches physical and mental maturity. The parents are indicated as the logical caretakers of the child. No one is better fitted to give the necessary care, nor can anyone be found more readily available for the purpose of ministering to the needs of the child. Clearly the intentions of nature in this respect are expressed in the presence and strength of the parental instinct. It would be incongruous to impose this task on anyone else. Hence, under normal conditions the duty to minister to the proper development of the child devolves on those who have given it being. This duty has its roots in the natural relation of causal dependence that arises between the child and its parents. This relation between the child and its progenitors calls for permanency. It creates a lasting state, a permanent order.

The interests of the child and therefore those of the race are adequately protected only on condition that those who give it life also charge themselves with the further duty of its care and education. For the accomplishment of this task

it is essential that there exist between the progenitors a lasting union of life. Human sex life is not satisfied with transient relations; it demands a stable order, a scheme that provides the conditions in which all the purposes of sex life can be adequately fulfilled. Nothing less will answer the purpose than a permanent union of the progenitors. This permanent state made necessary by due regard for the good of the offspring is marriage. Therefore, marriage is the essential outgrowth of the inherent consequences of the sexual union. In it the common responsibility arising out of the sex act finds its logical and socially sanctioned expression. It is far more, therefore, than a conventional form. It represents the concrete embodiment of the inherent responsibility connected with the sexual act. The welfare of future generations calls for better guarantees than the oaths of infatuated lovers would furnish. A matter touching on human welfare in such a vital manner cannot be left to the judgment and decision of the individual; it must be authoritatively regulated in accordance with the tremendous issues that are at stake. The sex life possesses a social character, and consequently must be subject to social control. Social approval

can be given only to that form of sex life which contains all the guarantees of the fulfillment of the responsibilities attendant upon it. This is marriage.

Accordingly, the proper form of human sex life is the marital community. Sex life outside of marriage is not well-regulated, because it fails to make due provision for the normal possibilities that are involved. Outside of the permanent marriage institution sex life lacks that adaptation to ends which is the characteristic of rational human conduct. Extra-matrimonial sex intercourse not only renders precarious the proper rearing of the offspring, but it also endangers procreation itself, for it is a known fact that extra-matrimonial sex relations are always accompanied by the fear of parenthood. They are indulged in for the purpose of mere selfish gratification. In the so-called free love unions the participants do not want to be bound together by the responsibility for the care of offspring. As a consequence, they dread fertility and shirk parenthood.

The best moral and spiritual interests of the race are served by a permanent bond that holds the parents together. No other arrangement does justice to the child. For the home presided over

by the progenitors and bound together by loyalty and a sense of responsibility no substitute has been devised. The child cannot inherit the finer spiritual qualities which the parents do not possess themselves. If the parents are devoid of a deeper sense of duty and loyalty, they cannot transmit it as a precious legacy to their offspring. Responsibility must govern the entire human sex life. The permanent marriage institution, therefore, is not a mere external, arbitrary form, but the visible expression of an inner truth—namely, the truth that out of the sex union inescapable responsibilities spontaneously arise, and that it is the fundamental law of morality that man must assume the consequences of his acts. To flee from the consequences of one's acts is immoral and cowardly. Love without responsibility is but disguised selfishness. The willingness, therefore, to bind oneself by the marriage tie and thus to stand by the consequences of one's actions is the criterion and test of sincere love. Rightly Foerster speaks of the educational function of the indissoluble marriage; he calls it the great educator to seriousness and honesty in human relations. If irresponsibility and egotism may find a place in this basic relation, which by its very nature is fraught with im-

portant social consequences, then all human relations will become infected with the same destructive properties and all human conduct will sink to the level of irresponsibility. Opportunistic expediency and utilitarianism will invade the entire sphere of life and vitiate all human relations.

The important part which marriage has played in the moral development of man is beautifully set forth by Dr. Henry Neumann. "Accepting marital obligations in the right spirit," he writes, "has given the human race a priceless training which today and tomorrow will still require. It has, in the first place, done more than any other institution to promote the exercising, and thereby the developing, of regard for others. In the second place, marriage has afforded mankind a precious development in responsibility. We need not shut our eyes to the harm done by preaching a sheeplike submissiveness. There are no ideals which have never been perverted—witness liberty or love of country. But when all allowance has been made for the hurt inflicted by misusing ideals of duty, it remains that our world, for all its defects, is a better place than it would otherwise be because parents have trained themselves to be re-

sponsible, pledge-keeping people. The spiritual fiber of mankind is stronger at this moment for every act of faithfulness to their task which fathers and mothers have performed" (*op. cit.*).

In Christian marriage an additional element must be considered. Besides the legal stability, which is based on the needs of man, we have here the sacramental bond that gives an added strength to the marriage union. Christian parents have the exalted mission of building up the mystical body of Christ; consequently, their mutual relations lie on the same plane as those of Christ to His Church. If Christ's intimate union with His Church is the prototype of the sacramental marriage union, the indissolubility of the latter follows with logical necessity. The sacramental blessing sanctifies the source of life and lifts it to the sphere of the supernatural. It endows the sexual union with higher purposes and reinforces it by divine grace. Thus, marriage becomes the worthy root of the human race; the only healthy root of society, State and Church. "And if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom., ii, 16).

CHAPTER IV

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF SEX LIFE

EVEN on the purely biological level the sexual life embodies values of a high order; as a creative function it serves the most vital social interests. The growth of the sex glands also has much to do with the emotional development of the individual; but since we are here in presence of a purely vegetative phenomenon not conditioned by the use of the function, the subject is irrelevant to an ethical evaluation of the sex life.

We turn, then, to the consideration of the spiritual meaning of the sex life. Catholic sex morality has been accused of ignoring the spiritual factor in sex life and of being utterly blind to its esthetical side. As a consequence, the Catholic interpretation of sex life has been regarded as grossly material and inherently vulgar. Typical of this view is a communication of a correspondent in *The New Republic* (June 19, 1929, "Catholics and Birth Control"), in which the writer says: "The impression which forced itself

on me whilst reading Mr. Ward's article, 'The Catholics and Birth Control,' is that Mr. Ward, like all Catholics—and most Protestants—has little or no appreciation of the esthetical and spiritual side of sex love. Why is it that the more 'religious' people are, the more they look upon the creative force in life as something essentially dirty, vulgar, materialistic? . . . One would think that the function of religion would be to point out the subtle, spiritual values in things, but in sex love you have the paradox that the more 'religious' a man is, the more blind he is to the spiritual possibilities and subtler meanings—the more his mind sees only the crude, the physical, sensual side. The real animus behind the objection to birth control is the unshakable conviction that sex love in itself (apart from the function of reproduction) is something essentially sinful and wholly materialistic. As a matter of fact, nothing in life is more mental than sex, because in nothing else does the attitude of mind so completely determine whether the effects are good or bad. . . . The churches wink at many forms of sexual debasement and crudity, and tolerate the coarse guffaws and snickers that greet any allusion to sex. In fact, in these matters you can do or

say almost anything you want to and avoid serious censure from the religious, as long as you show that you consider sex as something dirty and cheap—something to joke about. But what fills fundamentalists with horror is to have serious-minded people show an appreciation for the beauty and constructive possibilities in sex. To think that the creative power in life has a spiritual side—that is the unforgivable sin according to the constituted authorities supposed to guide our spiritual life!" We have here a misconception that is not uncommon. In view of such grotesque misrepresentation it becomes imperative to point out that Catholic sex morality not only is thoroughly aware of the spiritual values that can be realized through sex life, but also gives them their proper emphasis.

The question engaging our attention may take the following concrete form: "What do men seek when they enter into this intimate community of life which is called marriage and what do they find therein?" The answer would be: in the first place, they seek spiritual companionship and polarization of their love. This love, if it is honest and noble, will of itself lead to fertility.

Accordingly, the desire for affection comes first and precedes the desire for offspring.

The object of our inquiry, however, is not to describe the subjective psychological factors that lead to marriage, but to ascertain objective values and their respective rank. It is a well-known fact that, as far as psychological motivation is concerned, objectively inferior values may exert a far greater appeal than objectively higher ones. This subjective force of motivation is not the concern of ethics, which builds up its scale of values on an ontological basis. The tendency of our days is to approach every problem from the subjective point of view and to put the question about the purpose of marriage in this manner: "What does marriage give me and what benefit do I derive from it?" This subjectivism is inclined to overestimate personal experience and to attribute to it an objective value which in reality it does not possess. Now, the objective nature of the sex life includes the biological phase as well as the spiritual. Neither, therefore, may be ignored. Their relative position, however, will have to be determined by further inquiry.

A. The Facts and Their Ethical Appreciation

Every physical act that is experienced in consciousness possesses a truly mental significance and exerts an influence on the spiritual life of man. Such an act may assume a symbolical character and become expressive of an inner spiritual attitude. In this sense, the sexual life has a psychic side and a spiritual meaning. Since it has been previously established that the sexual life requires for its well-regulated exercise the permanent state of marriage, the question will have to be narrowed to this: "What spiritual values can married persons, taken not merely as biological types but as spiritual entities, derive from the intimate community into which they have entered by mutual consent?"

It is repugnant to the Catholic way of thinking to look upon marriage as nothing else but a union for the production of children. Marriage serves this purpose and derives from this basic end its essential constitution, but it is also capable of realizing personal values of a high order. The kind of union demanded by marriage calls for mutual love, without which it would be farcical

and revolting. But, when based on love, it contributes in an eminent degree to the welfare of the contracting parties, enhances their personal life, enriches them emotionally, and contributes in every respect to their happiness. This high good is guaranteed by mutual fidelity, loving coöperation, and a general sharing of all interests. It comprises a common enjoyment of earthly possessions and the cultivation of mutual confidence, regard and affection. Rightly Dr. Francis J. Hall says: "Mutual affection should indeed be the antecedent of marriage, for without it the obligations of married life cannot properly be fulfilled. In particular, a loveless marriage cannot exhibit the type which God wills it to exhibit of the union between Christ and His Church, and the marriage union is an appointed school for the practice of Christian charity" ("Dogmatic Theology," New York City).

The fulfillment of these lofty aims, however, is conditioned on the moral character of those who are joined in wedlock; it depends on the quality of their mutual love, their readiness to make sacrifices, and their willingness to afford one another that compensation of which men stand in need. Of this love and spiritual harmony that

must prevail between the spouses the sex act may become a symbolical expression. The intimate surrender of the body, inherent in this act, is calculated to promote mutual trust and to strengthen the bond of mutual fidelity. Accordingly, the sex life has a spiritual significance inasmuch as from the bodily union involved in its exercise there may blossom forth a close and beautiful union and harmony of souls. This purpose which transcends the physical sphere and belongs to the realm of the spirit should be realized simultaneously with the biological end of the sex life.

Another consideration must be introduced into the question of the spiritual aspects of the sex life. The sex instinct may produce in the individual an emotional unrest and tension, which can become a moral danger and cause psychic distress. It must be held, however, that this spontaneous self-assertion of the sex life, albeit imperious, is never irresistible. Proof for this contention is the continence practised by numerous virgins of both sexes, as also by many conscientious married couples. Honest and experienced physicians and educators confirm this view, and our own conscience bears witness to its truth. The reason for the freedom of man in the presence

of the sex instinct lies in the fact that, since it is not essential for self-preservation, the economy of nature does not require it to be compelling. The interests of the race are adequately served as long as it manifests itself as a more or less potent impulse. The personal character of love, moreover, would be incompatible with the compulsory nature of an instinct. The dogma of original sin, then, explains how this instinct has been converted into an unregulated tendency, rebellious to the moral order. This turbulence, easily leading to excesses, in theological terminology is known as concupiscence.

In our present state, control of this unregulated tendency has become necessary if it is not to exceed rational bounds. The danger of incontinence cannot be avoided without serious will discipline, and especially not without the supernatural helps that come to us by means of prayer and the use of the Sacraments. These are the indispensable means for the mastery of the sex instinct. Next to these spiritual means comes the regulated exercise of the sex life, for it also aids towards the preservation of chastity and renders the danger of incontinence remote. Marriage, thus, serves as an antidote against concupiscence.

Patently, this is of great spiritual and moral significance. Married people can render one to the other no slight spiritual favor when they anticipate human weakness and forestall moral lapses by asking or granting the marital privilege in order to allay concupiscence. In this case marriage shows its connection with the individual good of the spouses, because it lightens their moral struggles in a sphere in which the combat may become very arduous and disastrous. This is the second spiritual effect that may be realized through the sex life.

The preceding must not be understood as if sensual gratification could ever be made an end in itself, or as if it were the foremost purpose of marriage. But the allaying of concupiscence appears as a concomitant phenomenon of processes that of themselves lead to the intended biological result. It is the natural by-product of an act that in itself is morally justifiable. Also it must be borne in mind that we are speaking of sexual life as exercised in the married state.

This brings us to the crux of the problem of sex morality. The crucial point of this problem is the question whether the three effects of the sexual life that have been pointed out stand in a rela-

tion of coördination or subordination. The labels, primary and secondary, cannot be applied until this issue has been settled, unless we wish to be guilty of an unwarranted assumption. The relative rank of these three values that may be realized through the sex life cannot be discovered by a comparison of these ends among themselves, such a comparison being impossible since the three goods in question belong to different and disparate orders of being. What we will have to ascertain is, whether one of these ends is so connected with the sex life that it determines the essential meaning, leaving to the others only that of accessory resultants, or whether the three are related to the sex function in identically the same manner so that the one may be substituted for the other at will and as concrete circumstances might suggest.

Unbiased investigation makes it evident that the causal nexus of the first of these three factors with the sex life is radically different from the causal relation inherent in the other two. This difference is given in the objective order of things and independent of subjective factors. Procreation can be secured in no other way than by means of sexual activity, but the reinforcement of spirit-

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE

ual love and the allaying of concupiscence may be brought about in many other ways. Consequently, the connection of sex with procreation is closer and more essential than with the individual good of the spouses. Procreation stands out as the primary end of the sex life, whilst other results are of a secondary and subordinate nature. The former is invariable and imbedded in the structure of nature; the latter are variable and subjectively conditioned. Childbearing is not the whole of marriage, but it is central. The relation of the various ends that may be realized in marriage is fairly well set forth in the following passage: "Yet, if the complex whole of marriage can less and less be adequately described as the bearing and bringing up of a family, no other outcome of the physical act in marriage is so invariable and sure as childbearing, and the constant guarding and modification of the physical act needed to prevent conception often tends to destroy other results or change them. And we may well pause before assuming that we can eliminate the most sure result of a natural process and yet retain uninjured the other more variable ones; that we can cut out the family and family life from marriage yet keep all we want of the rest

that marriage means with no further trouble" (E. V. and A. D. Lindsay, "The Conscious Limitation of the Birth-Rate," in *The Hibbert Journal,* January, 1924).

The argument may be amplified in the following manner. The primary end results from the innate potency and natural structure of the unimpeded exercise of the sex function without any further requirement, whereas this same sexual activity can become a vehicle of genuinely spiritual love only when the agents are mentally and morally qualified to make it such, for in itself the sexual act may just as well be a manifestation of self-indulgence and brutality, as it but too often actually is. The same holds true of the third spiritual good, the appeasing of concupiscence, that may arise from the sex act. To the sensually inclined every sense-gratification increases the desire for more and leaves them in a state of increased restiveness, whereas the morally disciplined pass through it to a condition of mental calm and peace of heart. These facts of experience are embodied in the formula which we have adopted, namely, that procreation is the primary end of sex life and that other results are secondary, incidental and dependent on sub-

jective mental attitudes presupposing a considerable degree of moral maturity. To realize simultaneously the physical and spiritual values of the sex life constitutes the perfection of married life and may rightly be called an art. Those who have mastered this art will be able to divest marriage of every vestige of coarseness and selfishness, to surround it with the glamour of tenderness and beauty, and render it a veritable paradise of love, sweetness and happiness. It is then that marriage becomes a creative relation in every sense, on the physical as well as the spiritual plane, and that it not only produces new life but deepens, perfects, intensifies, enriches and harmonizes that which already exists.

B. Corollaries

I

Where an objective task is given, there also a way is indicated which serves as the norm of our conduct. The essential connection of sex life with procreation furnishes the first rule of sexual behavior. Still, since procreation is not the only purpose of sex life, it is not the only factor that determines and regulates sex activity. Proper sex conduct must take into account, not only the good

of the offspring, but also the good of husband and wife. Sex life touches on the physical as well as the spiritual sphere, and to both of these spheres it must duly adjust itself. It is wrong to say that Catholic sex morality ignores the welfare of the marriage partners and sacrifices it entirely to the preservation of the species.

The law of charity embraces all human relationships, and accordingly applies also to the relation of husband and wife. In fact, for them it has an added and poignant significance since in a very special manner they have become neighbors. Sexual behavior is not exempt from the law of charity. Hence, any sex act which violates the personal dignity of the other party and destroys true love, even though it does not interfere with procreation, is morally objectionable because contrary to charity. Abstention from sex intercourse may be required not merely by regard for the welfare of the child, but by due consideration for the good of the partner. Love in marriage must be considerate and thoughtful. To be in accord with the primary as well as the secondary end, the sex life must be carried on in a way that is suitable to procreation and likewise answers the requirements of love.

Some would make it appear that a conflict exists between the interests of the child and those of the parents. This view has no basis in fact, for the majority of the marriages that are dissolved are childless. Apparently, then, the opportunity for personal happiness is no greater in such marriages than in those that are blessed with offspring. In reality, the situation is quite different. Faithfulness to the primary end of marriage redounds to the welfare of the parents. It deepens the sense of responsibility and strengthens the bond of love. It intensifies and cements the spiritual union and brings the parents more closely together.

The quieting of the sex passion is also one of the secondary aims of marriage. It likewise must determine the manner in which sex activity is to be exercised. In this respect the rule will be: sex activity must be indulged in only so far as it really contributes towards the calming of the passion. Undisciplined indulgence has the contrary effect of excessively stimulating the passion and gradually rendering it uncontrollable. Such indulgence would be no remedy for concupiscence, but on the contrary would only serve to increase it beyond measure. From this point of view

moderation is absolutely indispensable in the exercise of the sex function. The Church, therefore, requires in married persons as well as in unmarried individuals modesty, self-control, moderation and chastity. Unrestrained indulgence can never be good and is contrary to reason. Again, loyalty to the primary end of marriage will prove useful. The prospect of offspring intensifies the consciousness of responsibility in the use of the sex function, and acts as a wholesome restraint on carnal desires. It reinforces the moral sense and thus creates inhibitions against the enticements of irresponsible lust.

We may now lay down our first corollary in connection with the spiritual side of the sex life. It reads: sex behavior must be regulated in such a way that, whilst it does not obstruct the primary purpose of procreation, it at the same time realizes the secondary ends by deepening the love of the marriage partners and assisting them in the struggle for self-mastery. If this rule is observed, enrichment of life and genuine happiness will be the outcome, because the happiness of a marriage ultimately does not rest on the gratification of the sex passion, but rather on subduing and mastering it.

II

Viewed from this spiritual angle, sex life has the purpose of expressing and deepening love, of calming the restiveness of the heart, and of leading to an enrichment of life by mutual complementation. We have previously seen that for the sake of the offspring those who wish to enter into sexual union must give to this union a permanently binding form, which in the case of Christians is sealed by a sacramental blessing. In no other way can the welfare of the offspring be adequately guaranteed.

The personal good of the consorts requires in a similar manner that their union assume the stable form of a permanent state of life and an abiding order. Sexual love, if not stabilized by fidelity, would be only a matter of fleeting impulse and fickle sentiment. Nor could it really enrich life or lead to larger self-fulfillment. To burgeon into a richer spiritual significance, the sex union must be based on a firm and impregnable basis.

A temporary union can produce none of those finer spiritual values that are expected of the sex life, but merely fosters libertinism and selfishness. Durable community of life, on the other hand,

may gradually bring about that beautiful harmony of two souls which is the aim of marriage on the psychic level. Let us hear Professor Felix Adler on the subject: "There are always at least latent discords, we do not naturally fall into tune with one another. The Platonic fancy of the two halves of the soul uniting is a myth. It is enough for human nature's daily need that there be some powerful initial attraction, some genuine fund of congeniality to be augmented and perfected as time goes on. Perfect congeniality is to be created, not found" ("Permanence or Impermanence of Marriage," in *The Hibbert Journal,* October, 1923). Temporariness would frustrate this end, which can be achieved only in the course of a lifetime. Hence, permanence becomes peremptory if marriage is to ripen into genuine spiritual union.

The binding force of the marriage vow exerts a powerful psychological influence. Of this Professor F. W. Foerster speaks in the following passage: "These erotic idealists continually forget that a pledge of loyalty is not a mere matter of compulsion from without, of holding a union forcibly together, at any cost, however empty it may be of real meaning. Such a pledge is in itself

a spiritual force, possessed of the most potent educational influence over the human sex relationship. It tends to direct attention to the inner significance of love, just as, on the other hand, the mere pursuit of sex pleasure ends in characterless superficiality. Its effect is like that of an earnest prayer, which, apart from its strictly religious effect, acts as a powerful auto-suggestive agent upon the mind of the sincere supplicant, and itself awakens new forces. A solemn pledge of loyalty, a determined direction of will towards faithfulness, actually increases the constancy of the feelings themselves. . . . Modern study of hygienic pedagogy and of psychotherapy confirms the idea that nothing is so capable of exerting a purifying and protective influence over the thoughts and will as a firm and definitely expressed resolution. It rallies all the higher forces together, and restrains us from every species of thoughtless dallying with temptation. A solemn oath, a great thought out of the realm of imperishable values, is like the presence of a noble man, in whose company one is compelled to think one's best thoughts and to forget moments of weakness. In considering the problem of sex and education, this is the point of view from which lifelong monogamy

should be regarded. This bond is not something artificial or untrue. It is a great character-training force, which elevates and purifies earthly love by bringing it into contact with eternal love" ("Marriage and the Sex Problem," New York City).

Easy divorce produces the most devastating effects. Besides preventing the educational results which marriage as a permanent institution would have, it unfits man for every form of community life and makes him impatient of every species of restraint. Again we may quote Dr. Foerster, who writes: "The sort of people who will lightly separate from one another because their patience and sense of social duty is subjected to trial, will more and more fall under the dominion of their own moods, selfish fancy and egoism. In this fashion they become increasingly incapable of entering into happy social relationships; it is their curse and their natural punishment that they slip further and further away from the happiness they pursue, and to obtain which they abandon all deeper sense of duty" (*op. cit.*). Easy solubility of the marriage tie encourages instability of the heart, makes for internal restlessness, unleashes the selfish instincts, and leads to a general demoralization and degradation of life.

Permanent marriage is the last bulwark against egotism. If this breaks down, egotism will have its way in all departments of life and weaken the entire social structure.

We can readily understand in the light of psychology why the Saviour of mankind elevated marriage to the rank of a sacrament in order to give it greater stability and permanence. In doing so He has not only benefited society, but also ensured to the individuals entering into marriage all the high spiritual values which this state of life can give. Moreover, the graces that flow from the sacrament impart added strength to realize the indissoluble unity demanded by the Christian ideal.

The upshot of our discussion amounts to this, that the permanent marriage institution not only guarantees the welfare of the offspring but at the same time furnishes the essential and indispensable condition for the attainment of the highest possible spiritual good of the marriage partners. Permanent marriage is not a failure, but is still the source of advantages which can be obtained in no other way. Says Professor Adler: "And again if there be no absolutely perfect marriages, there are many in which a degree of ethical development as well as of happiness is attained that is to

be met with in no other human relationship" (*loc. cit.*).

Nowhere do we find more onesidedness and bias than in the views that bear on the sex life. The extreme poles in the evaluation of sex are represented by naturalism and prudery. The former sees no menace in the sphere of sex, the latter descries danger everywhere. Ultimately both of these extreme views flow from the same source, namely, impotence and helplessness in the presence of the sex impulse. Calm judgment tells us neither to underrate nor overrate the demoniacal power that sometimes manifests itself in connection with the procreative instinct.

Fully appreciating the God-willed tasks of the sexual life, the proper fulfillment of which is truly virtuous and meritorious, the Catholic view also realizes that the original fall has brought disorder into the realm of sex so that even the legitimate use is attended by an irrational agitation. The vehemence of the feeling and the feverishness of the corporeal pleasure temporarily eclipses rational reflection. This condition, though not sinful in itself, is a remnant of original sin (St. Thomas, *Summa theol.,* I–II, Q. xxxiv; and I, Q. xcviii, 1).

This tendency to excess inherent in the sex

appetite is undoubtedly humiliating for man. Men of fine sensibilities smart under the painful realization. So it comes that the sex act is placed under the benign protection of shame and surrounded with reticence and reserve. Those of finer fiber shrink from all boldness in this respect. Shame and shyness can be overcome only by perfect confidence. Confidence converts shame and reserve into trustful security and frankness. This we observe in the relation of the child to the mother and the patient to the trusted physician. In a similar manner the peculiar timidity attaching to the sex function can be eased without detriment to conscience and moral refinement only where profound confidence is engendered by a community of life and a willingness to assume all the consequences of the life-producing act, that is, in marriage based on a solemn pledge.

The natural restlessness of the instinct requires, then, a relationship of strongly founded confidence, a sacred personal intimacy, a hallowed privacy such as is afforded by the life partnership of indissoluble marriage. In Christian marriage again this holy privacy is placed under the august shadow of a sacrament and inundated with supernatural grace. Thus, the married state by assign-

ing to sex activity a well-defined realm and investing it with solemn responsibilities offers an efficacious means for the quieting of the sex passion.

We can conclude that indissoluble marriage, especially when reinforced by sacramental grace, guarantees in every respect both the welfare of the race as well as the highest good of the two life partners, helping them to fullest spiritual self-realization and protecting them against the allurements of passion. The right form of the monogamous, indissoluble marriage is, as F. W. Foerster well says, "the true bulwark of freedom, the sole guarantee for and the surest means of attaining true personal life" (*op. cit.*). It creates freedom for the spiritual self, places man beyond the reach of the allurements of the senses, and prevents him from becoming the sport of passing moods and whims. Man cannot gain true freedom except by binding himself. Pointedly Dr. Henry Neumann remarks: "The fundamental question is not at all whether one is going to be bound or free. It is the far more practical question by what we are to be bound—by the undisciplined, capricious part of us, or by the good sense which marks the higher life" (*op. cit.*).

CHAPTER V

THE ETHICS OF SEX LIFE

As the title of this book indicates, the present discussion does not confine itself to rational principles but takes into account also the truths known by supernatural revelation. It evaluates the facts of the sex life from the moral point of view, and thus is differentiated from the Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Hygiene, Psychology, Sociology and Pedagogy of sex. The office of sex ethics is to discover the values that can be realized, the laws that are operative, and the duties that confront man in this segment of human life. Typical of ethical consideration is that it relates facts to the totality of the scheme of things and gives them their proper place in the cosmic order. Hence, it reflects a world-view and is based on a metaphysical interpretation of life. Accordingly, Catholic sex ethics will differ substantially from the materialistic variety. The laws which the latter lays down are rarely anything more than mere hygienic counsels to be observed

in order to maintain physical and mental fitness. Thus, for example, Dr. André Tridon says: "Man's duty in the future shall be represented by one word: health—health which will mean mental and physical happiness and efficiency and will enable us to coöperate fully with other human beings, without ever becoming a burden to the community" ("Psychoanalysis," New York City).

A. The General Norm

The correct attitude of man towards the sex life consists in harmonizing this sphere of life with the dictates of reason. It affirms the values that are embodied in this realm and recognizes them as duties. Thus, the objective values and ends become motives that prompt our activities. Mental attitudes must receive their orientation from objects, for human activity must have a definite content and cannot tend towards an empty void.

In his theological *Summa,* St. Thomas proposes the question how sexual activity becomes moral. The answer is that sex conduct is morally unobjectionable when it is directed towards a fulfillment of the values and objectives that are regulative for this sphere. Consequently, no moral disorder

exists when man uses a function for the ends for which it is ordained and in the manner which is prescribed for its exercise (II–II, Q. cliii, art. 2).

Now, we have seen that the sex life antecedent to any construction which human thought may put upon it possesses an objective meaning and is bound up with objective values. The sex function contains within itself the norm of its use. The individual who uses this function is confronted by objectively determined and consequently binding tasks. That removes from the sex sphere all arbitrariness which would shape the purposes of the sex life to suit its fancy. The three ends which analysis has revealed to us stand out clearly and impose themselves with unequivocal authority.

The supreme imperative of sex ethics, accordingly, may take this form: sex activity is good and licit when it aims at the fulfillment of the ends immanent in the sex function in the order of their relative value. Negatively, the law may be expressed as follows: all acts are wrong and forbidden that contravene the inherent purposes of the sex function or that invert their objective order. Since matters of vital importance, trenching

deeply on social as well as individual welfare, are involved, this basic law of the sex life binds under grievous sin.

B. Specific Precepts

"Thou shalt not commit adultery," is the commandment in which God voices His will that the source of life be kept sacred. At first blush it would seem that this precept expresses only a fraction of the obligations which we have with regard to the sex life. Withal, it is a comprehensive formula embracing the entire domain of the sex life.

We have taken pains to prove that the marital bond is not an artificial form imposed on human sex life, but rather an outgrowth resulting from its innermost nature. By this fact extramatrimonial sex intercourse stands already condemned. Hence, the precept not to violate either by external deed or internal desire the sanctity of marriage includes the demand to give to sex life its one and only legitimate form. Since sex life may not be exercised except in the state of marriage, the commandment to respect the sanctity of marriage sufficiently defines correct sex conduct in its entirety.

Sometimes fault is found with the way in which

the Church officially defines the ends of marriage. It is objected that she completely identifies the ends of marriage with those of sex life. Thus, Canon 1013 reads: "The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of offspring; the secondary purpose mutual help and the healing of concupiscence." This seems to be a misconception of marriage, for the essence of marriage is love. But a second paragraph follows, in which we read: "The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage in virtue of the sacrament obtain a special firmness." These properties imply that marriage must be based on and animated by love, for an inseparable community of life without mutual affection would verge on the monstrous. But, unless we conceive of love as a vague sentiment, it must have a definite content and tasks in the fulfillment of which it may prove itself. The tasks which Canon Law sets the marriage partners, indeed, transcend the sexual life and constitute a challenge to their highest spiritual powers. The upbuilding of a true home in which the children may grow to full physical and spiritual development, and the creation of spiritual harmony between two beings, are objec-

tives worthy of the best. Verily, the terms used by the Code are pregnant with rich and beautiful meaning. Where mutual relations between two individuals are to be fixed on a juridical basis, definite terms have to be used, but that does not imply that there are not between them other duties that cannot be couched in legal language. Only hypocrisy and egotism that wish to evade the duties in question will fail to see this. The very practical circumscription of the marriage duties given by Canon Law is no bar to the highest idealism in Christian marriage, but furnishes the soil in which this idealism may grow to the finest fruitage.

Even medical authority may be adduced in support of the Christian idea of marriage. Thus, Sir Arthur Newsholme, K.C.B., M.D., writes: "Medical and public opinion in civilized communities concur in the conclusion that the life-long union of one man and one woman as a rule is the most conducive to the happiness and the moral elevation of the partners and their children. For many the decay of dogmatic theology has removed the arguments for monogamy which were regarded as authoritative; but there can be no doubt that, whether from the Christian or

the independent standpoint, whatever diminishes monogamy and deteriorates the family life based on monogamy is anti-social and anarchic in its trend. . . . Instincts alone cannot be trusted unless voluntarily controlled and regulated, for in the various complexes of communal life they fail to appreciate the needs and rights of others" ("The Moral Aspects of Social Hygiene," in *The Hibbert Journal,* January, 1924).

That Canon Law makes the child central in its definition of marriage bespeaks great wisdom and profound psychological insight. It removes the nebulosity that hangs around modern theories of marriage and voices an important psychological fact. The latter is well expressed by Dr. Felix Adler, who says: "Those who believe that a theory of marriage can be constructed without reference to the child ignore the peculiar good which it is the prerogative of parents to bestow upon children, and the peculiar ethical reaction which they get in return" (*loc. cit.*).

CHAPTER VI

EDUCATION AND SEX

THE preceding discussion has led to certain results. It has demonstrated the existence of a hierarchical order among the various values of the sex life. It has also proved that sex life can be truly humanized only through marriage. Naturally, therefore, the first question with which sex ethics will have to deal is that of marital chastity.

Of the word chastity we have so far made little use, because we wished to deduce the tasks and duties that arise in the sexual sphere from an analysis of the sex function itself, and for the sake of greater clarity desired to avoid encumbering our examination with technical terminology. Moreover, the term chastity is subject to misunderstanding since excessive timidity, superficiality, sensuality and malice have read into it meanings which it does not contain. As a result of our study the term will take on a fresh meaning and appear with the clearness of a new coin.

To speak of marital chastity seems paradoxical to many. This happens to those who see only the negative aspect of chastity and who identify it exclusively with a prohibition. To such chastity is nothing but a taboo. But chastity also means respect and reverence for our body. To speak of marital chastity, then, puts no undue strain on the term but appears quite natural. Marital chastity in this deeper understanding is nothing less than profound reverence for the exalted tasks which the Creator has associated with the sex life. It expresses itself in faithfulness to the intentions of the Maker.

But marital chastity is not the only form of this virtue. Another problem arises. We must also know what constitutes the proper sex conduct for those who live outside the married state. Training for chastity must begin at an early stage of life if it is ever to gain full flowering. The ethics of the sex life, therefore, must be followed and supplemented by a sexual pedagogy, which prepares the individual for a practical realization of the ethical ideal in life. Physiology acquaints us with the fact that there is in the sexual life a typical period of development which extends over a number of years, and the psychology of adolescence

knows of the problems and struggles that confront youth in these years of transition. How to deal properly with the newly awakening corporal and spiritual energies is of vital importance. The following sections are devoted to the means by which the dangers that threaten chastity may be overcome and this virtue preserved and fortified in the various stages and circumstances of life. They complete the treatise, since they also take into account the right sexual conduct of the non-married.

A. THE VALUE OF CHASTITY

Chastity in its essence is reverence. It is a reverence which regards as sacred the ends and tasks of the sex life and excludes from its use all thoughtless frivolity and rapacious selfishness. This reverence leads to a disciplining of the raw instincts, which, if left to themselves, would seek only their own gratification. In the non-married chastity will produce the recognition that the sex function may be activated only in the married state, because only there its ends are adequately guaranteed. The proper form of chastity outside marriage, then, is absolute continence. Thus, the virtue of chastity has two sides: for the non-mar-

ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

ried it means abstinence from all sex activity, for the married it means right use. Both forms spring from the same root—respect for the purpose of sex life.

Chastity belongs to the restraining virtues, because it keeps within the bounds of reason our unregulated instincts. It is related to the cardinal virtue of temperance. From modesty it differs in this way: whereas chastity refrains from actions which constitute sexual irregularity, modesty prevents actions which might lead to sexual disorder. Modesty is the safeguard of chastity. It has built up certain external forms that remove temptation and thus assist in the preservation of the virtue of chastity. These external forms, sometimes called conventions, have their uses and should not be treated lightly. Immodesty paves the way for unchastity. The modern revolt against modesty is a serious menace. Dr. Neumann makes a very reasonable plea for this much-derided virtue. "Modesty," he writes, "is another attitude at which it is very easy to sneer as old-fashioned. Here let it be said that modesty still has a part to play in sensible lives. Modesty is protective. While the properly behaved girl is also subjected to insult, the flaunting types are much more likely

to attract such attention and to encourage it. There is no need to make a special bid for the leers and worse. The effect on the men is also to be weighed. Many men would prefer to keep their desires in check but find difficulty. They should be helped, not hindered. With commercial interests doing all in their power to inflame the sex impulses, the least that well-bred women can do is not to encourage the process. . . . Many manners are undoubtedly nothing more than conventions; but a little reflection will often show how sensible are the reasons for them. Break the conventions when they stand in the way of a genuinely better life. Respect them when they train habits which are still needed" (*op. cit.*).

Extramarital chastity is not all negative. Man is placed before the alternative of married companionship or unmarried singleness. Unmarried singleness is the expression of fuller independence with regard to the sex life as also of more undivided devotion to the service of God. Celibacy as a state of life enables the individual to respond in an unreserved manner to the love of God, and accordingly ranks higher than the married state. It does not follow that those who enter into this

walk of life choose it precisely on account of this exalted motive. Their choice may be dictated by reasons of expedience.

This state of life in which personal striving is completely, fully and directly turned towards God, is known in Christian parlance as virginity; the therein implied renunciation of sex community with a life partner is called virginal chastity. It liberates the heart from carnal desires, frees men from dependence on creatures, and affords a clearer vision of the spiritual and the Divine. "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt., v. 8).

Catholic sex morality, emphasizing as it does the sacramental elevation of marriage and possessing the wonderful liturgy of the Nuptial Mass, need not fear that it will lower the respect for the faithful fulfillment of the duties of married life, when on the other hand it asserts the superiority of virginity as an extraordinary way of life. On the contrary, the value of chastity is thus brought home with more telling force. Chastity begins with proper regulation and control of the sex life but it culminates in the complete emancipation from its exactions. It leads to the highest personal freedom and spiritual independence.

Chastity is the great character-test for every human being.

B. THE ROAD TO CHASTITY

In every man the road to chastity leads through the peculiar dangers and hazards of youth. It is a delicate task to assist youth in gaining the right conscious and deliberate will-attitude towards sex. The naïve unconcern about sex matters that characterizes childhood must in due course of time be superseded by reverential knowledge of the mysteries of life and love and the proper frame of mind towards the forces that serve the preservation of the species.

In this period of transition youth needs intelligent friendship and understanding sympathy. It is bewildered and confused by the new energies it feels stirring within itself. Its peace of mind has been disturbed, and it experiences a sense of uneasiness and uncertainty. Sometimes its consciousness is tinged with a feeling of shame and guilt. Companionship it seeks, but it is not free from a certain shyness. It is not irreverent, but looks for a worthy object to which it may bow. All in all, the mind of youth at this stage is in a perfectly chaotic condition. What is required is a

friendly mediation that will bring form into this chaos and light into the confusion, that will sow good seeds in this fruitful soil, that will utilize the awakening energies and turn the aimless longings into the right channels. The age of transition has also its repellent aspects, and the older generation is often tempted to lose patience with its strange manners, but it should be remembered that these young folks labor under inherent inhibitions that account for their awkwardness. In dealing with them firmness and determination must be combined with sympathy and understanding. It is advisable that the young themselves should realize that they are in the grip of certain crude forces manifesting their presence by uncouthness of behavior and lack of poise.

The starting point for a successful educational guidance of the young must be psychological understanding of the phenomenon of adolescence. The consciousness of the adolescent becomes enlarged by entirely new elements and hitherto unknown experiences of both a physiological and a psychic nature. He meets difficulties and inhibitions of an unfamiliar type. It is as if vistas into new worlds were opening before him. The youth knows that something is happening to him but

he does not see the drift and meaning of what is going on. The whole affair to him is decidedly mysterious. The work of the educator is determined by this peculiar situation.

(1) The educator must assist the growing boy and girl to understand themselves. It is vital that these young people learn that they have entered on a very critical period of their development which will prove decisive for their future happiness. The knowledge that they do not have to face these inner storms and trials alone, but that they can rely on a friendly counsellor, will bring great relief to sorely tried and puzzled youth. Doubts and stubborn questions arise which imperiously call for an answer. Enlightenment is indispensable, but the information must be gradual and imparted in such a manner that it will not unduly arouse the easily excited emotions of the young. In itself the necessary sex instruction would not be so difficult to impart if juvenile curiosity on the subject had not already been inflamed by subterranean information, and if the customs of our days had not overstimulated sexuality even in the young. This fact, however, makes the duty of giving the right kind of information at the right moment the more impera-

tive. To delay information when the circumstances seem to demand it is a dangerous policy and unfair to the young. Says Mr. A. Herbert Gray: "The policy of silence is as cruel as its assumptions are untrue. Ignorance is an impossibility for the young. Our choice lies between garbled, distorted and defiled knowledge and a knowledge that shall be clean, innocent and helpful" ("Men, Women and God").

The young person must be told what in this sphere is purely physiological and about which he, therefore, need not at all worry. Such illuminating knowledge brings freedom from anxiety. On account of its educational importance the task belongs primarily to the parents, who naturally possess the key that will unlock the innermost soul of their children. If the parents really have the confidence of their children, the latter will not go to other sources of information but will first approach those to whom they usually bring their difficulties and doubts.

(2) The educator must build up in the young a genuine self-respect and a high sense of honor. These constitute a valuable protection against irresponsible sex behavior, and restrain the desire for liberty which asserts itself so powerfully in

these years. Nothing is more dangerous at this stage of development than sentimentality and false romanticism which assume a playful attitude towards the awakening sex instinct and fail to appreciate its responsibilities. The awakening sex life carries within itself forces that can be utilized for its proper regulation. The new manliness that accompanies the development of the sex instinct can be exploited in behalf of self-denial. The chivalrous tendencies that manifest themselves at this time can be used to strengthen respect for the other sex. These natural forces are supremely important and should not be ignored by the educator, but they will be infinitely more effective if they are purified and reinforced by religious motives. During this period the individual also expands in the direction of altruism, which in its turn can be profitably used for self-sacrifice and self-control. The educator accordingly has many allies that facilitate his work. Pedagogical skill consists in employing these natural helps to the best advantage.

(3) The educator must induce the young to devote themselves seriously to the work of self-education. Will is the most important factor in the formation of character. Will-training, there-

fore, is the backbone of sexual education. Professor W. F. Foerster is eminently right when he says: "The protection of youth from the dangers of sex is a question of power rather than of knowledge" (*op. cit.*). Sex education must guard against the danger of overspecialization. It is only an aspect of education in general. It is education for responsibility in one particular sphere. Strengthening of the will along general lines is an essential condition of success. There is particular danger that the will may be enfeebled during the period of pubescence. The will must be taught to assert itself against the varying moods of this age. Health is essential for the exercise of will-energy. Hence, play and physical exercise must receive due attention. But the will remains the central factor. It is tragic that young people often allow themselves to drift in these decisive years of formation. Not unfrequently they manifest a deplorable unpunctuality in their work, a general indifference for serious tasks, and a complete surrender to their emotions and moods. Such a general attitude is bound to prove disastrous in the realm of sex. Not rarely it leads to the secret sin. To prevent disaster the will must be awakened and all its resources mobilized. Information

is important, but will-discipline is far more important.

Of course, the supernatural aids must not be overlooked. Without regular and devout use of the sacraments little headway will be made. The direction of an earnest confessor who readily descries existing weaknesses, prescribes corresponding remedies, and imposes will-strengthening tasks, is of incalculable value. The intimate friendship with the Saviour, to whom youth may entrust itself in Holy Communion, will arouse a lofty ambition and call forth undreamt-of energies. In view of human frailty the virtue of chastity cannot be acquired without divine assistance. Hence, St. Augustine sought strength in prayer: "And my whole hope is only in Thy exceeding great mercy. . . . O charity, my God, kindle me! Thou commandest continence; give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt" ("The Confessions," X, 29).

This, then, is the true road to chastity. In his early youth man must acquire the spirit of sacrifice and renunciation and a spiritual taste for the happiness and beauty that go with self-mastery. On the body he will learn to look as the wonderful handiwork of God which has been entrusted

to him, and which he must use in accord with the will of the Maker. He will be neither ashamed nor afraid of natural processes, but will quickly recognize the presence of danger. Poise and assurance will characterize his attitude towards sex life. In this regard also Professor Foerster strikes the right note as appears in the following passage: "The behavior of any young person in the sphere of sex is the resultant of his or her education as a whole; has the latter been merely intellectual, or has it been soft or superficial, then the boy or girl, in spite of the best possible instruction, will fall a victim to the first temptation; on the other hand, has the whole education been such as to strengthen the spiritual and moral nature against what is sensual and lowering, then he or she will know what is impure, even in the absence of any sexual instruction, just as Parsifal, on the first coming into contact with Kundry, saw in a flash the whole of what lay behind her enticements. The sexual behavior of a given individual is a very good touchstone by which to judge of his whole education, for it enables us to perceive whether or not his training has been based upon a true knowledge of human nature and a disciplining of its weaknesses" (*op. cit.*).

C. THE PRESERVATION OF CHASTITY

The first aim of chastity in youth is to fortify the individual against the allurements of his own sexuality. The young must learn to keep their hearts free from violent sexual emotion, to look with a clean eye on the facts of sex, and to refrain from interfering with the spontaneous evolution of their sexual nature. To this soon comes the very important problem of the right relation to the other sex.

This relation must transcend the sex level and take on a larger social significance. It must be built on mutual personal respect and a willingness to coöperate with one another in all social and cultural interests. The respectful social intercourse to be established between persons of maturity is gradually divested of the awkwardness and crudities of the adolescent years. Good will and nobility of character are decisive in finding the right relation. Mutual respect, however, is necessary whether the choice goes in the direction of lifelong celibacy or marriage.

We still have to consider the special situation of those who are preparing themselves for the married state. The preservation of chastity in

this case depends on the presence of honest and genuine love. He who sincerely loves will keep the proper distance and will not allow the bloom to be worn off the flower of love by cheapening erotic intimacies. True love gives strength of character and assists in the acquisition of self-control. It never exploits the other for the sake of personal gratification. Improper physical intimacies short-circuit love on the lower plane, and will not permit it to reach the higher spiritual level. Speaking of the degrading effect of casual erotic practices, Mr. Sherwood Eddy says: "These formative years are laying the foundation for one's emotional and affectional life of the future, and they are shaping personality and character while they are molten. Any course of action which violates one's deepest acquired convictions may give rise to agonizing mental conflicts and complexes. It is not enough to justify a course of action by merely saying that it is natural. It is natural to devour one's food as an animal or a savage. It is natural greedily to seize a bone or a woman. But surely the long and dearly bought progress of man has been by restraining the individual instincts and immediate sensuous satisfactions in the interest of social welfare, by long-

circuiting sex expression through the whole wide range of esthetic, affectional, and social appeal. By stern self-discipline, by self-restraint, by the sublimation of the primitive, instinctive drives into the higher reaches of the intellectual, the esthetic, and the spiritual, the heights of human attainment have been won. To cast away all this, to sell one's dearly bought spiritual birthright for a mess of material pottage, to prostitute the high possibilities of love to the mockery and caricature of the shallow and promiscuous thrills of a purely physical passion, is foredoomed to failure" (*op. cit.*).

Courtship should be entered upon with a deep sense of responsibility. What has begun as a mere sex intimacy is not likely to terminate in a happy marriage. What Mr. J. Exner says on this subject is full of wisdom: "Intelligent choice of a mate must not look only to mutual physical attraction but more so to harmony of tastes, feelings, desires, aspirations, appreciations, and of temperament. It must weigh spiritual more than physical values. . . . The lifemate must possess characteristics more individualized than the capacity to gratify physical hunger. But this consideration is likely to be swept aside when the merely physical

urges are overstimulated. The best marriages are not begun because of physical attraction alone. But many marriages that end in failure begin in just this poorer way" ("The Question of Petting," New York City). Chastity can be kept untarnished only when courtship is begun and continued with a full consciousness of the responsibilities that are involved in marriage. Where frivolity prevails tragedy is inevitable.

Woman's welfare is more directly bound up with the preservation of chastity than that of man. It ought, therefore, to be her special concern to safeguard this beautiful virtue both in her own interests and those of the family. Woman can exert a special power over man in this regard, and it is her sacred duty to use this power. She can sharpen man's conscience in these matters and inspire him with a sense of reverence with respect to everything that pertains to sex. It depends largely on her whether the sex relation will be ennobled and refined or vulgarized and degraded. Man is inclined to look up to her as an ideal; it is her fault if she steps down from the pedestal and cheapens herself. When she does this, she unleashes destructive forces that will prove her own undoing and jeopardize the high-

est good of the race. In part we can endorse what Dr. Neumann says concerning this point: "Building up these finer attitudes needs the help of men and women both. But there is a special chance open to the world's women by reason of their distinctive aptitude for exercising life's more gracious, refining influences. Good as it is in many ways that women now go in for athletics and that the older notion of romantic chivalry has given place to partnership and equality, there is no slight loss when girls and women let the equality idea rob them of a certain fineness. Not only in the crowded street cars and in the other incidents of modern business life is this breaking down of the older reserves so common. Why must being like the men be interpreted to mean: be like them in their coarseness? It is no sentimentalizing to say that men still need the civilizing influences which women are particularly fitted to offer. The gross animality still found in men requires all the help it can receive from the finer leadings which mark the lady" (*op. cit.*). No sensible man will regard this as a tacit acceptance of the double standard of sex morality, but the patent fact is that woman suffers more severely from laxity in sex matters than man, and that, consequently, in sheer

self-defence she must demand absolute respect for the virtue of chastity and allow no compromise.

We may touch at this juncture on the subject of mixed marriages. We have said that woman can exert a wholesome and elevating influence on man in this matter of sex. It is apparent that woman can reach the conscience of man much more effectively if he shares her religious views and possesses the same ideals of marriage. There is in that case firm common ground. A young woman who prevails on her fiancé to approach the sacraments with her at regular intervals builds up a strong bulwark against improper advances and obtains the best guarantees for a happy future.

And what can the young man do to keep the virtue of chastity intact in himself and in his prospective lifemate? First of all, he must firmly believe in the possibility of a chaste life before marriage and be convinced that God demands sexual abstinence outside the married state. God imposes no duty that is beyond our power, and He knows well what man can accomplish aided by His grace. This realization will influence the young man's attitude towards his fiancée and

make him feel ashamed of any importunity. We quote Dr. R. C. Bull on the subject of continence. "Sexual intercourse, during the period between puberty and marriage," he writes, "is not only unnecessary but may be harmful. Illicit intercourse not only has a deleterious effect on the morals of the individual so indulging, but also excites the animal passions and stimulates the glands of the reproductive system to such excessive activity that it may lead to their permanent impairment" ("Freshman Hygiene," Philadelphia).

Of course, he who wishes to keep his body clean must begin by keeping his mind clean. The hygiene of the imagination is of vital importance. Indulging in morbid erotic thoughts will lead to evil deeds, and may also cause psychic disturbances. Abstention never hurts when the mind stands behind the external renunciation, but when the heart secretly clings to the object that is externally surrendered trouble will arise. The words of Dr. Neumann on the subject deserve to be pondered. They read: "If outward abstention produces inner conflict, the trouble may lie in the spirit in which the renouncing is done. . . . We can refrain from the outward acts and still burn with hunger for them. . . . Wisdom might

seem to suggest that the hurt comes from foregoing only halfheartedly, and that a sound self-control must try to enlist the whole self on its side. . . . The spirit in which one abstains is everything" (*op. cit.*).

To preserve bodily integrity before marriage, a young man must also possess some knowledge of women. As far as our question is concerned, we may divide women into three groups. There are good and pure-minded woman, who inspire respect. These women make the task of the young man easy. In their presence he will have no difficulty in keeping the right distance. There are girls of loose morals, who hold themselves cheap and sell their favors like wares. With such the self-respecting young man will have nothing to do, though he may pity these unfortunate beings. But there is an intermediary group: thoughtless, superficial and frivolous girls, who play with fire. These set man the most difficult task, and test to the utmost his character. He must protect these silly creatures against their folly and against his own passions which they foolishly arouse. That is the height of chivalry. The loss of chastity will be a paralyzing memory in afterlife and a source of painful self-reproach. Chastity untarnished

will be a fountainhead of moral strength, and give the best guarantee of fidelity in the marital union.

D. The Test and Confirmation of Chastity

Marriage does not dispense with the virtue of chastity, but rather tests it in a very severe manner. To look upon the married state as the playground of the unbridled sex passion is taking a very wrong view of this hallowed state. Sexual gratification merely for its own sake is nowhere sanctioned. Let us listen to Raphael speaking to Tobias. "Then the angel Raphael said to him: 'Hear me, and I will shew thee, who they are over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding: over them the devil hath power" (Tobias, vi. 16, 17). Sex life in the married state must, as everything in God's world, be well-ordered and regulated by reason.

Chastity before marriage is the finest flower and fruitage of the whole work of education and character-building. It reveals more than anything else

whether the young man is morally sound, and whether his character is of sterling worth. In marriage chastity plays the same important part. In it the whole moral character of the individual expresses itself. It constitutes the criterion by which moral worth may be gauged. Failure in this respect reveals a serious moral flaw. Married life that is defective in this regard can have little value for eternity.

The teachings of Catholic sex morality are unequivocal and clear. Catholic doctrine integrates the sex life with the whole of life, and does not give it the isolated position which moderns assign to it. Moreover, it judges this life not by quantitative but qualitative standards, and demands that the objective values imbedded in its nature be the norms of all sex activity. Deliberately to exclude one of these objective values constitutes a moral disorder.

Which one of the three objective values in a concrete situation will be made the impelling motive of the marital act, is left to the prudent judgment of the partners. They may wish to transmit the great blessing of life; they may be prompted by a desire to exchange a sign of affection and fidelity, or they may have the intention

of becalming the restiveness of the sex urge. In neither of these cases is the marital act released of its inherent responsibilities or grossly self-centered. In all of these cases the act retains its objective meaning and serves the purposes for which it has been intended by nature. It is, however, not justifiable to substitute one of these values for the others—that is, to seek one of them in such a way as positively to exclude the others. In that case, marriage would be made a mere instrument of lust. Marriage may not be made a garden of voluptuousness, but must remain fruitful soil which bears fruits for the individual and humanity. The use of marriage in case of sterility is morally blameless, because no positive will act obstructs the ends of nature. Only that which deliberately renders the soil of the marital garden barren can be branded as immoral.

And right here we have to face a great issue. It cannot be denied that modern economic conditions render the raising of a large family no easy task. True, these conditions are unjust and can be remedied; but they do actually exist, and no substantial improvement of the situation is in sight. On the other hand, the moral law cannot be twisted to fit in with economic conditions. As

a consequence of this untoward economic situation, Catholic parents of today are confronted by a serious alternative: they must choose between immorality or moral heroism. A compromise, a *via media,* a trimming middle course, is impossible. The law of God is clear and has been, moreover, explicitly interpreted by the Church. The Church cannot recede from the position which she has taken in this question. "Were the Church," writes the Rev. John M. Cooper, S.T.D., "to give in one inch on her adamantine stand against contraception, she would soon be impaled on one or other horn of the dilemma of stultifying and contradicting herself or of abandoning her ethics of sex all along the line" ("The Ethics of Birth Control," in *The Ecclesiastical Review,* 1928).

Christianity has never been a religion of escape. It does not flinch from duties nor try to evade responsibilities. It accepts the duties and responsibilities of life, however arduous they may be. The consistent Christian must be of the stuff of which martyrs are made. At any time, he may be called upon to make heroic sacrifices for his religion. Every age demands martyrdom of some kind; the first ages of Christianity called for mar-

tyrs who were willing to suffer for the sake of the faith; our age calls for martyrs who are willing to suffer for the sake of morality. Moral heroism of some kind is inseparable from Christianity. If a measure of moral heroism is required of the Catholic parents of our days, this really is nothing extraordinary. Let us not forget that, if Christianity demands much of human nature, it also adds to human insufficiency supernatural forces that can be had for the asking. Catholic parents, if they do not wish to fall below the line of morality, must rise to a high level of virtue and unselfishness. Faithfulness to the duties of married life calls for sacrifices; yes, but everybody who wishes to live up to the standards of Christian life must be prepared to make sacrifices. In many ways Christian living has been made more difficult in the modern world; withal, that does not dispense us from its obligations. What we really need in these days is a revival of the spirit of heroic sacrifice, because even the fulfillment of mere duty nowadays calls for a degree of heroism.

Momentous decisions are thrust on the men and women of our days. They must range themselves for or against the law of God. To which side

will marriage incline? Will it rise to the serene heights of sanctity, or will it sink to the depths of degradation? That is the decision which each Catholic couple will have to make. For every intentional thwarting of the ends of marriage is sinful. We may have profound sympathy with those who are struggling under severe handicaps, and we should try to render unbearable circumstances tolerable—and here are splendid opportunities for Christian charity, for to ease the struggles and alleviate the hardships of large families would be a fine task for Christian charity; but we cannot surrender principles on account of the difficulties of individuals, for this would be a ruinous policy leading to great social harm and to a general moral deterioration of the race. Hence, the Church must sternly resist any attempt to modify the law.

The ultimate reason of the uncompromising attitude of the Church is the objective character of the moral order. This order forever must lie out of reach of human arbitrariness. Once the principle is admitted that man can adjust the law to his fancied needs, all morality comes to an end. We hear men today speak of a bankruptcy of the old morality, because it refuses to be stretched to

suit their ideas of what ought to be. They would reshape this morality nearer to the heart's desire to help their fellow-men out of their moral difficulties and conflicts. In reality, they only admit thereby their impotence to meet an exacting moral situation and deny God the right to impose on man any duty that involves sacrifice. The whole technique of prevention is inspired by a philosophy of ease and pleasure. It is hedonistic in tendency, and as a matter of fact was inaugurated by those who belong to the economic classes that enjoy material comfort. Originally it was born, not of economic stress and strain, but of a desire for comfort. It is the offspring of selfishness and of dread of self-denial. Not those who are addicted to pleasure and averse to every serious moral effort must be allowed to fashion our moral ideals. Against such vulgarization of our ideals Professor F. W. Foerster enters a vehement protest. "It is perhaps," he writes, "the very worst type of mob tyranny that public opinion with regard to such matters should be governed, not by the great masters of the will and the great teachers of love (who know that great blessings are never won and kept without great denials), but by the great mass of uninspired men of the

world, who have not the faintest idea of what is meant by the awakening of the flesh through the spirit, men who have no special sense of honor with which to oppose the blind pressure of the sex instinct. Here indeed it will be necessary to arouse life to strong and high ideals, and not to allow the true doctrine to be lowered through human weakness" (*op. cit.*).

Pastoral experience will come to the conclusion that not every failing in this respect must be placed in the same category of guilt. Not everything here is downright malice and perversity of will. Failure may be due to weakness of will and inadequacy of moral strength, and not to a frivolous denial of duty. The will may at times break down in presence of the undoubtedly difficult duty of continence in the married state. Here especially the mutual support of the marriage partners is necessary. They will assist each other to overcome the existing difficulties and so regulate their marriage practice that it harmonizes with the law of God. Let them not falter. Their chief reliance must be on the grace of God. The defender of the traditional doctrine of the Church will point to the peace of conscience that comes from a fulfillment of duty and the happiness that

comes from sacrifice. "But, chiefly, he will speak of the Divine grace. The psychological bogies fatten on fear; against the confidence which comes of faith in God and the power of His grace they have no might. The present writer has suggested elsewhere that repressed complexes hold much the same place in the thought of today that was given to evil spirits by the early Christians. As faith in Christ then set men and women free from the tyranny of demons, so now the Christian message is that in the power of Christ the Christian can laugh at the bogies of the morbid psychologist. It is ludicrous indeed to think that one who shares in the victory of the resurrection cannot control his own passions, and when once the absurdity of that suggestion strikes us, the fear and the danger it breeds are gone" (The Rev. Leonard Hodgson, M.A., "Birth Control and Christian Ethics," in *The Hibbert Journal,* October, 1923).

We do not intend to minimize the difficulties that are connected with loyalty to the Christian ideal of marriage. But two serious-minded persons, who have received an abundance of sacramental grace, who keep their minds on the eternal rewards for sacrifices made, and who strengthen and comfort one another by encourag-

ing word and inspiring example, will prove equal to the heavy burdens and exacting duties which Christian marriage lays on them. High respect, however, is due to those who conscientiously live up to their marriage obligations, for marriage in our days tests moral fiber to the utmost. And what our age needs are men and women who are willing to suffer and battle for the integrity and sanctity of the marriage institution, who by their lives of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty rebuke the selfishness, sensuality and materialism of the worldly minded, and who by the silent martyrdom of faithfulness to the arduous requirements of Christian marriage bear eloquent witness to the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh.

CHAPTER VII

RETROSPECT

Sex ethics consists in the subordination of the sexual sphere to the totality of life with its manifold interests and responsibilities. The sex sphere is not an autonomous domain free from all law and responsibility. It is only a part of human life, and, therefore, must be properly integrated and harmonized with the rest of human life. It has numerous contacts with the wellbeing of other individuals and with the welfare of society, and this vital fact may not be ignored. To detach the sex life from these wider relations, to separate it from its consequences and make it merely a matter of personal concern, is the root of all sex immorality. This isolation also renders sex a destructive force in human affairs.

Catholic sex morality fulfills this essential requirement. It places the sex life under the august shadow of responsibility, and opposes its divorce from the higher aims of human existence. It gives to sex its place among other phenomena,

and sees it against larger backgrounds. It denies to the individual the right to make sex entirely subservient to his own personal interests, and resists the attempt to dissociate the sex function from procreation. In this manner it prevents sex from becoming a destructive force, and makes it a constructive power contributing to the enrichment of life and the good of humanity. "The sex teaching of the Catholic Church," says Mr. Patrick J. Ward, "is reasonable and healthful, and is mindful of those elements that work for the best interests of society. Chief among these are a spirit of self-mastery, of conscious and willing sacrifice, an understanding of the place of the individual in the social cosmos, a realization of the ordered relations of body and soul. The individual who successfully carries these into his personal life and relationships is the vital constructive force in society and the fiber of the State. He is putting into action what is essential to all human well-being, love of God and love of neighbor. This requires that he live faithfully according to all God's commandments and be ever ready to make personal sacrifices for the common good. He who fails to make this the measure of his conduct is a weakness in society. His actions are

characterized by a lack of self-control, a spirit of willfulness and self-love, a desire to avoid responsibility, and an inability to realize that the body must be governed by that superior faculty which marks off man distinctively from the animal world in the functions of which he participates" ("The Catholics and Birth Control," in *The New Republic,* May 29, 1929).

The present exposition has dealt only with fundamentals. Laboriously it has tried to construct the underpinning of the edifice of Catholic sex morality, leaving detailed application to fuller and more specialized treatises. In the very scheme of things and in the recognizable order of nature, it has sought deep and firm anchorage for the underlying principles on which moral theologians build their practical conclusions and which they usually take for granted as immediate data. Beginning with the biological root of sex in the bodily realm, it traces the irradiations of sex in the higher reaches of life and its vital consequences for human society. These questions are pivotal for the right evaluation of sex life. The modern confusion of thought makes it imperative to bring them out in clear and strong relief.

The stand of the Church on the central theme

of sex ethics, the question of birth control, has been unequivocal and unchanging. She has never wavered in her condemnation of this practice. Witness the decisions of the Roman Congregations, the declarations of the hierarchy and the unanimous teaching of the moral theologians. At present the world cannot forgive the Church her uncompromising attitude, and abuses her for her firmness. The day may come when it will reverse its verdict and realize that the Church in refusing to sanction irresponsible sex action has saved humanity and civilization, for racial health cannot be based on sexual irresponsibility.

Though not a Catholic, Professor F. W. Foerster commends the Church's high-principled resistance to all contraceptive practices. Himself an experienced educator, he sees behind this stand true psychological insight and far-reaching pedagogical vision. We quote the interesting passage: "If today the Church is practically the only great moral agency that lays down strict rules for the regulation of the sex life, this is not due to ossified traditions or moral rigidity, but to the fact that she takes a comprehensive view of the whole of life and realizes that all the departments of life are causally connected and interdependent.

She does not proceed from the uprooted and divided thought of our days that would split off one sphere of activity and conduct from the rest of all reality and make it for the time being the measure and norm of morality. She knows that there is an over-arching unity in life and one great unifying law. She sees that life and society are held together by the idea of responsibility and the spirit of sacrifice, and she will not allow this truth to become blurred by the sophistry of passion or obscured by the seeming success of the moment" ("Jugendseele, Jugendbewegung, Jugendziel," Leipzig).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica.*

Noldin, H., S.J., *De sexto præcepto et de usu matrimonii.*

Vermeersch, A., S.J., *De castitate.*

Ross, J. Elliot, C.S.P., *Christian Ethics.*

Gillet, M. S., O.P., *Innocence and Ignorance.* Translated by J. Elliot Ross, C.S.P., Ph.D.

Koch-Preuss, *A Handbook of Moral Theology.*

McHugh, J. A., O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P., *Moral Theology.*

Day, H. C., S.J., *The New Morality.*

Foerster, F. W., *Marriage and the Sex Problem.* Translated by Meyrick Booth, Ph.D.

Bruehl, C. P., *Birth Control and Eugenics.*

Cooper, J. M., *Sex Education in the Home.*

Birth-Control.

Religion Outlines for Colleges. Course IV: *Life Problems.*

Galloway, T. W., *The Sex Factor in Human Life.*

Hadfield, J. A., *Psychology and Morals.*

Gerrard, T. J., *Marriage and Parenthood.*

Meyer, Fulgence, O.F.M., *Plain Talks on Marriage.*

Ryan, J. A., *The Church and Socialism and Other Essays.*

Chesterton, G. K., *What's Wrong With the World?*

Scott, M. J., S.J., *Radio Talks.*

Hennrich, K. J., O.M.Cap., *Watchful Elders.*
Neumann, H., *Modern Youth and Marriage.*
Eddy, Sherwood, *Sex and Youth.*
Exner, M. J., *The Rational Sex Life for Men.*
Muensterberg, H., *Psychology and Social Sanity.*
Calverton, V. F., *The Bankruptcy of Marriage.*
Drake, Durant, *The New Morality.*
Burrow, Trigant, *The Social Basis of Consciousness.*
Gillis, J. M., C.S.P., *The Catholic Church and the Home.*
Hall, G. Stanley, *Adolescence.*
Bigelow, M. A., *Adolescence.*
Moore, Th. V., O.S.B., *Dynamic Psychology.*
Adler, Felix, *The Reconstruction of the Spiritual Ideal.*
Woods, H., S.J., *Nature's Protest Against Counter-Conceptives.*

Date Due

AUG 2 6

176 G23 11,208
Geis, Rudolph
AUTHOR
Catholic Sex Morality
TITLE
DATE
ST. ALBERT'S COLLEGE LIBRARY